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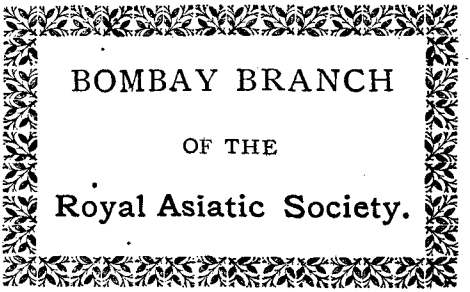

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KIRKUP'S SKETCH OF THE GIOTTO FRESCO.

THE SPIRITUAL MESSAGE OF DANTE

BY THE

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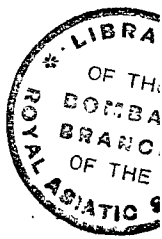

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THE WILLIAM BELDEN NOBLE LECTURES

THIS Lectureship was constituted a perpetual foundation in Harvard University in 1898, as a memorial to the late William Belden Noble of Washington, D.C. (Harvard, 1885). The deed of gift provides that the lectures shall be not less than six in number, that they shall be delivered annually, and, if convenient, in the Phillips Brooks House, during the season of Advent. Each lecturer shall have ample notice of his appointment, and the publication of each course of lectures is required. The purpose of the Lectureship will be further seen in the following citation from the deed of gift by which it was established :—

"The object of the founder of the Lectures is to continue the mission of William Belden Noble, whose supreme desire it was to extend the influence of Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life ; to make known the meaning of the words of

Jesus, 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.' In accordance with the large interpretation of the influence of Jesus by the late Phillips Brooks, with whose religious teaching he in whose memory the Lectures are established, and also the founder of the Lectures, were in deep sympathy, it is intended that the scope of the Lectures shall be as wide as the highest interests of humanity. With this end in view,—the perfection of the spiritual man and the consecration by the spirit of Jesus of every department of human character, thought and activity,—the Lectures may include philosophy, literature, art, poetry, the natural sciences, political economy, sociology, ethics, history both civil and ecclesiastical, as well as theology, and the more direct interests of the religious life. Beyond a sympathy with the purposes of the Lectures, as thus defined, no restriction is placed upon the lecturer."

PREFACE

THESE lectures are published according to the conditions laid down by the Noble Trust. They are not intended as a contribution to the critical study of the *Divina Commedia*: they are rather designed to be illustrative of the principles set out in the Noble Lectures which I gave in 1904. They are simply thoughts on religious experience as exemplified in Dante's poem. They were given without manuscript, and as presented here they are compilations from notes, not written lectures. Some repetition is needful in addresses orally given. Such repetitions are blemishes in the printed lectures; but I could not remove such blemishes without recasting the lectures and altering their character as spoken addresses.

In conclusion I wish to acknowledge the valuable help given me by three friends, the Hon. William Warren Vernon, the Rev. Canon Moore, and Dr Paget Toynbee. To the debt which, in common with all Dante students, I owe them,

they have added the personal kindness of reading the proof-sheets of these lectures. Their thoughtful criticism and suggestions have helped me much. For their willing and experienced aid I shall always feel grateful.

W. BOYD CARPENTER.

P.S.—Some of the illustrations are taken from Lord Vernon's famous edition of the *Inferno*, and I gladly join with my publishers in acknowledging the kind way in which the members of Lord Vernon's family whom we approached approved our wishes to reproduce them. We trust that these reproductions will be regarded as a small tribute to the value of a work which still remains a monument of loving, prolonged, and painstaking devotion to the study of Dante.

December 31st, 1913.
6 LITTLE CLOISTERS,
WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

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THE SPIRITUAL MESSAGE OF DANTE

LECTURE I

THE MAN

THE study of great works is both a discipline and a delight—it is a discipline as it directs and trains our thoughts: it is a delight as it evokes our emotions; but beyond this the greater works have a power more captivating and more elusive: they possess what we call charm — something which we feel but which we cannot explain: it defies definition. We all remember Goldsmith's quaint apology in the preface to the *Vicar of Wakefield*: "There are a hundred faults in this thing, and a hundred things might be said to prove them beautiful. But it is needless. A book may be amusing with numerous errors, or it may be dull without a single absurdity." We may find fault with every feature in a face, but we may admire

it all together. We shall not understand charm by analysis, and greatness often defies it.

Why is the *Divina Commedia* a great poem? Can we give it a place among epic poems? Is it commended by its erudition? Do we justify its claim to greatness by citing a number of striking images or eloquent or pathetic passages? We feel at once that these pleadings are inadequate. We feel that we are nearer the mark when we point out the marvellous skill with which these elements are built into and become features of a great and sublime whole—an edifice grand in conception, vigorously harmonious in the relation of its parts. It is the superb structure which evokes our admiration. And yet again—are we satisfied? Does this greatness of design, even when supported by beauty and delicacy of detail, give the reason why we place it among eminent works? When we analyse the sunbeam by splitting it up into its sevenfold hues, we may mark the tints of separate beauty, but we lose our sunbeam. Thus dissected, we may admire the parts, but we miss the bright cheerfulness and the genial warmth of the beam which made us glad. There was a personal appeal to us in the undivided sunbeam: it rejoiced the eye: it warmed the body. Is there not in like manner a personal appeal which streams to us from great works? The

personality of the long ago speaks to us! We feel the genial warmth of his common sympathy: we are treading the great path which he trod: we feel, I had almost said, the hand pressure of that long ago. It is not only the great theme which commands attention, but the voice which speaks, for we feel that it is the voice of one who like ourselves was a wayfarer on life's road.

The same human touch quickens our interest in drama, for in it we may read the history of the soul. We love to see the courageous soul confronting adversity—refusing to be crushed by fate, or else expiring nobly, unconquered by the dead weight of hard necessity. In this often lies the real fascination of Greek drama; in this lies the power of that Old Testament drama presented in the Book of Job. The patriarch meets calamity after calamity: he is seen as a lonely individual beaten to the earth by great and inscrutable power. His trouble and perplexity is aggravated by the superficial chatter and conventional explanations of commonplace minds: the men whose fortunes are unimpaired can counsel cheap resignation: even shallow philosophy is sufficient to explain the misfortunes of others; but the lonely patriarch will not barter his intellectual honesty for any comfortable but unreal explanation. He will be true to himself: he will not

make his judgment blind: the heavy hand of power can find no justification in the mere exercise of power. Might cannot defend things without some moral pleadings. Job possesses intellectual honesty: and he will hold fast his integrity. Here is the problem of life seen exerting its pressure: man is groping towards light. Herein is the power of the book: it finds a place for the soul—the soul has its drama, because the soul has its rights.

Such great works possess a power of appeal, because they recognise the drama of the soul. Sooner or later, said a great French teacher, our interest is in the soul. The thought of mankind moving in cycles from naturalism to intellectualism, perchance has found its way back to-day to the ever pressing question of soul-values. Philosophical systems have been framed into compact and logical harmony, but have split asunder because the soul has been left out. A globe was formed of gold with a small admixture of lead: the lead was only one ten-thousandth part of the whole; but a slight blow shattered the globe: to be strong gold needs to be blended with some substance whose molecules are finer than its own; the molecules of lead are coarser than those of gold: the globe therefore having no homogeneity was shivered. Philosophical systems may be

likened to gold, but for enduring strength they must admit that which is of finer texture than mere logical intellect: the soul must be given her place in the system. Herein the collective wisdom of mankind is greater than that of philosophers. "Philosophy is so simple, but we are so learned," is said to be the reproach of one distinguished modern thinker. Philosophers have often forgotten the soul, and so they have miscalculated life-values; but mankind has welcomed every true representation of the drama of the soul. The *Confessions* of St Augustine, the story of *Dr Faustus*, the play of *Hamlet*, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, the *Rubáiyát* of Omar Khayyám have awakened responsive interest, because men have heard in them the voices of the soul.

The *Divina Commedia* is a drama of the soul. It has other elements of attraction. By its wide range, by its vivid imaginative power, by its acute reflections, by its scholastic disquisitions, it appeals to our historical, poetical, philosophical, and theological tastes. To use an illustration. It has its architecture, and in it the style of the period may be traced: its decorations and embellishments excite the attention of various experts: the marks of its age are everywhere upon it. But voices which are heard within are the voices of the soul: whatever may be the character of its columns and

buttresses, its windows and its arches, the whole building is a place of worship. In it we may hear the cry of the soul which is striving to find itself, to express itself, and to reach at last the great central soul of love in which it can lose itself—burying the whole heart wide and warm in something greater than itself.

It is as a soul drama that I desire to set it before you. It is individual—yes, markedly so: the characteristics of a man of strong individuality are to be seen in it, but it is the drama of an individual who is finding his personality, if I may borrow a contemporary distinction of phrase.

The drama is the drama of an Italian soul—one Dante Allighieri by name; but for all that it might be your drama or mine, for its experiences follow the threefold cycle which philosophers, psychologists, and religious teachers have described in various terms. Sometimes it is the Nature stage followed by the negative stage, which in its turn gives place to the reconstructive stage. At other times it is spoken of as satisfaction followed by dissatisfaction, and this again succeeded by restored or renovated satisfaction. Integration surrenders to disintegration, and reintegration then is achieved. The story may be told in varying fashion. It is complacency giving way to struggle, and struggle crowned by peace. It is

self lost, and self sought, and self found. We may choose what language we please, but the experience is common enough. It is the struggle for the possession of our own spirit: it is a fight from natural life to spiritual: it is the winning of self after conflict. It reflects the Apostle's thought, "I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came sin revived, and I died; but the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and of death." Dante presents us with a cycle of experiences which have a profound significance for the soul. He is a man who goes on a pilgrimage seeking liberty. From one point of view it is the story of a man going in search of his soul. From another it is the story of the way in which God educates a man's soul. It is the same experience described from opposite sides. Without adopting any of the particular terms which have been used by teachers and thinkers, it is enough for us that we have in the *Divina Commedia* the chronicle of a great human experience: it sets out the story of a soul passing through such an experience: yet not as a passive subject, but as a co-operating intelligence. It is not merely an emotional record or an intellectual harmonisation: it is a living experience, set forth in threefold stages, and in each stage Dante shared. It is the drama of a soul.

There are many seductive bypaths along which one might be tempted to stray, and I do not promise that I may not be beguiled to stray, but my purpose is not to stray far enough to forget the sequence of the scenes which make up the dramatic whole.

Is there any one thought which may be said to govern the whole? Is there any word which, like the keynote of a melody, becomes dominant in the drama? I think there is. The one word which gives us the clue to the whole is love. Perhaps we may lose the force of its dramatic development by claiming thus early that love lies behind the play; but Dante himself has warned us that his work is not a tragedy: we are watching the unfolding of acts which are to have a happy and glorious close. The drama of the soul may possess tragic elements—it has, as we know, tragic possibilities, but it is moving forward to final scenes over which the light of heaven will shine and the music of heaven be heard; for love lies behind the movements of the universe. Hence, while I speak of it as the drama of the soul, I must also regard it as an unfolding of a divine education of man. From beginning to end, love—divine love—is working for the illumination, emancipation, and salvation of the soul. It is an education at the hand

of love. *Amore, amore, amore*—the sound is heard loudest and loftiest in the happy realms of Paradise, but it speaks on the winding terraces of Purgatory, and even in Hell it is not silent. "If I go up to heaven love is there: if I take the wings of the morning to begin the new life, it is there: if I go down into hell, it is there also." Every step of the way the pilgrim's feet are guided and safeguarded by grace and light from heaven: love never fails him: it moves to his aid though the pilgrim has not yet opened the door of his heart to let it in: it acts through various agencies to direct and protect the pilgrim: it stands waiting for the moment when the gate of the heart will be thrown open to its influence: and when it at length gains admission it vitalises, illumines, invigorates, and uplifts the soul into the regions which are peaceful through intensity of activity. The drama from the heavenly side is the education of the soul.

It is as a drama of the soul that we are to regard it. For this we need to know something of the character and circumstances of the man whose spiritual drama is set forth. What manner of man was Dante? What were his earthly experiences? What did life do for him? What did he say of life? These are the questions we ask.

First, then, what kind of a man was Dante? In other words, what was the nature of the raw material out of which this poet, who is to become a great spiritual teacher, was formed?

Can we conjure up his likeness? We have three chief sources of information: we have a description of his personal appearance given by Boccaccio; we have a portrait on the walls of the Bargello at Florence; and lastly, we have the mask, said to have been taken from the poet's face shortly after his death. There is enough resemblance between the painting, the mask, and Boccaccio's description to give us confidence in their general correctness. What, then, was Dante like?

Guided by Giotto's picture, I can see him walking with a quiet and even step along the streets of Florence: his somewhat shallow brow is unwrinkled: the chin is strong and firm: the mouth hints lightly at some self-confidence, tinged perhaps with scorn of empty heads: the nose—"the index of the face, the rudder of the will"—is long, firm, and tending towards the commanding type. He wears his robe with dignity, avoiding ungainly fold or gesture: his mouth can move to laughter, while his eye is steady, or again, the light of mirth will flicker across the eye while the face remains unmoved: he can indulge in impressions and emotions without losing his self-

control. Guided by the features which the mask discloses, I can see him, lean and gaunt, with a visage marked by pain, disappointment, disillusion, climbing some mountain path, bending his head before a sudden blizzard, and groping his way through blinding snow to the door of some peasant's hut and asking shelter for the night. He takes his seat on the bench within, loosens his mantle, and by the flickering firelight we may read the story which broken hopes, loneliness, and heart-hunger have written upon his countenance.

I may turn to Boccaccio's pages, and read that Dante "was of middle height. His face was long, his nose aquiline, his eyes rather large than small, his jaws heavy, with the under lip projecting beyond the upper. His complexion was dark, and his hair and beard thick, black, and crisp; and his countenance always sad and thoughtful." This is a picture of the poet in his mature years. Carlyle advised us to get a portrait of any hero whose life we wished to study. Carlyle was right, for the portrait helps our imagination: it affords us a rough key, if we are physiognomists, to unlock, perhaps, some hidden treasure-house of the life; but yet how small a thing it is! It can but show us the man at one epoch, perhaps only in one mood: the lines of the face are fixed: the expression will not change: it is but a passing

vestige of the man, not the man himself. This face has no laughter in it. We cannot catch upon it the magic gleam which crossed it as the happy jest rose to the mind ere it broke from the lips. This face is set, silent, sphinx-like. It is not the face of the tender friend who took the sorrowful by the hand and looked compassion upon them with dewy eyes. It is something, a little better than nothing: it gives shape, feature, outline, but it is not life. If it is the vessel at all, it is the vessel at anchor—"a painted ship upon a painted ocean"; it is not the ship splendid, glorious, moving in full sail, walking the waters like a thing of life.

We may feel all this as we look at Giotto's portrait or the mask of Dante. We can realise something about the poet as we contemplate these likenesses: we see a countenance, strong, sad, stern, proudly reticent—the portrait of one who could suffer and be silent. But is it Dante? Do we not miss something? Where, we may ask, is the elevation of the poet's soul? The exalted eye of one who has suffered and triumphed? The rapt aspect of him who beheld the light of heaven and the joys of the blessed? Shall we answer: "Life teaches man to wear a mask, lest his face should reveal too much"? It is true that man in his sad pilgrimage is often compelled to assume

the veil of defensive pride, till hard-won habit arms him with the enigmatic countenance which defies the scrutiny of intrusive curiosity. Shall we answer thus? or shall we say: "The face upon which we look is the face which has drooped in death. It is no longer under the government of the strong will, or of the joyous and triumphant soul: those blank eyes have no power to let loose the look of tenderness or to lighten with gleams of hope and glances of love"? It is but a mask after all: the real man is not here. All that this poor thing can tell us is the record of the lines which hardship, disappointment, endurance graved upon the suffering frame. It can tell us nothing of the inward drama—of the thrill of gladness, of the victorious contentment, and lastly of the peace which passed understanding. These things were written not upon the dead brow, but upon the tablets of the soul.

Let us look at the portrait, mark it carefully, and then put it away, or write beneath it the motto which was inscribed beneath Buchanan's likeness: "Pete scripta et astra, si vis nosse mentem suam." ("Seek his writings, but seek also the starry spirit which animated him, if you would know his mind.") So let us seek to know Dante. We shall learn something of the man from the story of his life and how he held himself amid its

changing scenes; but we shall learn still more from his writings. From these we shall be able to form a truer portrait of him; for as he writes he will reveal himself, and we shall understand him better as unconsciously he discloses to us what manner of man he was.

Sometimes critics have sought to reconstruct the personal character of a poet from his writings. Professor Masson tried to derive from the plays of Shakespeare a portrait of the great dramatist. Shakespeare had put many characters upon the stage. Did he in any one character picture himself, or, if not, was it possible to group together such harmonious and recurrent features as would give to us the true Shakespeare? The Professor thought so, and he presented for our acceptance his portrait of Shakespeare. It was a Shakespeare haunted by deep questionings, keenly alive to life's disappointments, possessed of a soul almost morbidly fond of dwelling on dark things, and marked therefore by a deep melancholy of soul. It was a blend of Hamlet, Jaques, and King Richard. Not everyone will accept such a portrait as exact or trustworthy. Many of us will ask, "Can our many-sided Shakespeare be presented to us by this eclectic method?" Whatever portrait is evolved, shall we not always feel that he was greater than that? We cannot think of him as a

kindly Hamlet, or as a melancholy Jaques, or as a gloomy and desponding Richard. If any character is to be chosen, Prospero comes nearer to my thought of him, but even this is not all Shakespeare: it is not Shakespeare in his youth: it is rather the Shakespeare of one epoch of his career, the Shakespeare who has lived and can now survey life with a happy detachment. It is a man without cynicism: no irritating *laudator temporis acti* who is for ever flinging the past in the happy and hopeful face of youth, but a kind-hearted man with a quick and tender sympathy with the young lives which are budding around him. But this is all fancy! It is speculation, unverifiable, misleading. Shakespeare, like Jove, takes many shapes, and defies us to detect him as he passes from form to form.

Happily, with Dante it is different: we have to deal with a more clearly defined individuality: he is the hero of his own poem: he is not, however, a vainglorious hero: he describes vivid incidents and stirring adventures, but he never writes *quorum pars magna fui*: and yet he was more than a great part of his own story: he was the centre of the whole action of his great poem. Dante himself is its very life. His figure is never obtruded upon us, but nevertheless he is constantly revealing himself to us, and as we read we realise how

much his presence counts in the work. We never resent this presence: our interest centres in it. We feel about Dante as we do about Christian in the *Pilgrim's Progress*. Bunyan's story, though so personal, is yet so impersonal: it ceases to be obtrusively personal because it is the picture of so many. In a similar fashion Dante's poem is in one sense impersonal, and yet the personality of the pilgrim is perhaps the most vivid thing in the whole poem.

It is impossible to describe this personality by setting down a mere catalogue of the characteristics of Dante as they are disclosed in the course of the story. On the other hand, we must note these separately or we shall fail to draw for ourselves any picture of what manner of man he was. Perhaps we may best achieve our aim by grouping certain characteristics and citing certain passages which tell their own story.

First, I may recall to your mind the keen and varied powers of observation which his works disclose. Dante is a man who perceives and reflects. "Wisdom is before him that hath understanding: but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth" (Prov. xvii. 24). How many there are who, for this reason, when travelling from Dan to Beersheba cry out that all the land is barren. But Dante is not of these: the world

lies open before him with all its beauty and its entrancing changes: he is Dante "who saw everything." But he not only saw, he noted: he stored in his memory what he saw, and as he needed he brought forth from his treasure things new and old. We shall realise this if we recall the natural objects to which he refers, and from which he derives so many illustrations. The leopard, the lion, the wolf, the mastiff and the greyhound, the goat and the sheep, the fox, the beaver, the otter, the she-cat and the mouse and the mole, the elephant and the bear, the horse, the ass, and the mule are among the animals he names. He bids us look up and see the birds of the air, and he speaks of the kite and the eagle, the crow and the rook, the goose and the cock, the crane, the stork, and the pelican, the blackbird and the magpie, the dove and the swan, the starling, the swallow, the lark, and the nightingale. Insects he notices: the fly and the gadfly, the wasp and the bee, the ant and the spider, the firefly and the butterfly, the locust, and even the detested flea. The lizard, the snail, and the scorpion, the frog, besides the dolphin and the whale, are made to serve his purpose. There are no fewer than between fifty and sixty living creatures mentioned in his works.

He notes the features of men: he singles out

the eagle eye of Cæsar ; he marks the spare loins of Michael Scot ; the small nose of Philippe III. of France, with the large and masculine nose of Charles I. of Anjou. He marks the gestures of men, which are eloquent of their occupation or their emotion. The swift movement of the runner ; the keen eye and nervous fingers of the tailor as he threads his needle (*Inf.* xv. 18–20) ; the clasped arms of the naked woman hugging close her babe as she escapes from the burning house (*Inf.* xxiii. 39–42) ; the stern self-possession of Farinata, whose very motionlessness becomes an eloquent gesture of pride, in contrast with the emotion of the grief-stricken Cavalcante. What character is expressed in the lines which tell of these two men in hell ! Cavalcante peering round with eager and anxious eyes in search of his son, and asking with tearful voice about his welfare, then sinking broken-hearted back into his fiery shroud. Farinata, with disdainful bearing—his lifted eyebrow showing his unquenched scorn,—unmoved by the other's emotion, waiting with superbly rigid patience and then continuing his speech as though no interruption had occurred. None but a keen observer of men could have drawn such a picture.

And as Dante marks the characteristic gestures of men, so he notes effects in Nature—effects of

water and of fire : the steaming hand in the winter stream (*Inf.* xxx. 92) ; oil in flame (*Inf.* xix. 28) ; green wood (*Inf.* xiii. 40) ; the darkening tint of burning paper (*Inf.* xxv. 64).

His frequent similes show not only a man observant of Nature, but in true sympathy with it. These revived spirits are like flowers awakening in the dawn :

"As florets, by the frosty air of night
Bent down and closed, when day has blanch'd their leaves,
Rise all unfolded on their spiry stems."
(*Inf.* ii. 127–129.)

The souls whose lives have flung away their glory are, when driven to their judgment at Charon's bidding, like autumn leaves :

"As fall off the light autumnal leaves,
One still another following, till the bough
Strews all its honours on the earth beneath."
(*Inf.* iii. 104–106.)

The spendthrifts and the misers clash together like opposing waves :

"E'en as a billow, in Charybdis rising,
Against encounter'd billow dashing breaks."
(*Inf.* vii. 22, 23.)

But more characteristic of Dante's faculty of

observation and reflection is his habit of using mental states to illustrate his subject. Thus early in the poem he pictures his own vacillation of thought:

"As one, who unresolves
What he hath late resolved, and with new thoughts
Changes his purpose, from his first intent
Removed; e'en such was I on that dun coast,
Wasting in thought my enterprise, at first
So eagerly embraced." (*Inf.* ii. 39–44.)

The quick changes of mind from eagerness to know the worst, to panic-stricken flight at beholding it, are given when the pilgrim fears treachery from demons in the eighth circle:

"I turn'd myself, as one
Impatient to behold that which beheld
He needs must shun, whom sudden fear unmans,
That he his flight delays not for the view."
(*Inf.* xxi. 24–27.)

The strange subconscious hope which mingles with a dreadful dream is described when Dante finds himself ashamed of his own vulgar curiosity, which provoked Virgil's angry contempt:

"As a man that dreams of harm
Befallen him, dreaming, wishes it a dream,
And that which is, desires as if it were not;

DANTE AND HIS BOOK, AFTER MICHELINO.
(Florence: The Duomo. Tempera Panel.)

Such then was I, who, wanting power to speak,
Wish'd to excuse myself, and all the while
Excused me, though unweeting that I did."
(*Inf.* xxx. 134–139.)

Sordello's bewildered delight at meeting Virgil is pictured as a joy so eager as to beget doubt:

"As one, who aught before him suddenly
Beholding, whence his wonder riseth, cries,
'It is, yet is not,' wavering in belief;
Such he appear'd." (*Purg.* vii. 9–12.)

More curious is the way in which he describes his own sense of surprise when he becomes aware that one of the seven sin-marks has left his brow:

"Then like to one, upon whose head is placed
Somewhat he deems not of, but from the becks
Of others, as they pass him by; his hand
Lends therefore help to assure him, searches, finds,
And well performs such office as the eye
Wants power to execute; so stretching forth
The fingers of my right hand, did I find
Six only of the letters, which his sword
Who bare the keys, had traced upon my brow."
(*Purg.* xii. 120–128.)

I need not multiply examples. I have given enough to show that Dante is well called the "man who saw everything"; but he saw as one who attaches meaning to what he saw. He saw not

as the empty gazer who idly glances at a passing object; but as the true seer whose mind, like a sword-thrust, pierces to the heart of what he sees, seizes it, and makes it a possession; he takes truth captive with his spear and his bow.

Again, if Dante is keenly observant, he is also keenly sensitive: his intellectual power leads him to observe and reflect: his emotional power enables him to feel. Thus he early lets us see the struggle which even great souls experience between the audacity of conscious power and the timidity of a sensitive temperament. The men who do great things are not, as a rule, the men impervious to fear; on the contrary, it is the mind which realises the greatness of a task which is most open to the onset of nervous terror. The panic of the coming effort has smitten great orators with the restlessness of apprehension or the icy touch of positive fear. "How cold your hand is," said a friend to William Pitt one night in the House of Commons. "Is it?" was the answer. "Then I shall speak well." "You will say — you are too nervous," said the greatest orator among English prelates—"Let me tell you that if you are not nervous you will never do it." The imagination which can conceive the magnitude of the task can best realise its difficulties. All this is well known, and this is what

we find disclosed to us by Dante. He pictures the lofty enterprise to which he is committed: he tells us how fear seized him and he shrank, driven to doubt by the sudden sense of his own weakness:

"But I, why should I then presume? or who
Permits it? Not Æneas I, nor Paul.
Myself I deem not worthy, and none else
Will deem me. I, if on this voyage then
I venture, fear it will in folly end."

(*Inf.* ii. 31–35.)

But here, again, the characteristic and indomitable courage of the great soul comes to rebuke him. He puts the words into the lips of Virgil, but as we read them we know that it is truly Dante's soul which speaks:

"Thy soul is by vile fear assail'd, which oft
So overcasts a man, that he recoils
From noblest resolution, like a beast
At some false semblance in the twilight gloom."

(*Inf.* ii. 46–49.)

Deeply Dante felt the danger of this weakness, and, mournfully as he enumerated the causes which brought trouble upon Italy, he placed this cowardly spirit—this *viltà d'animo, cioè pusillanimità*—among the moral and intellectual weaknesses of his countrymen (*Convito*, bk. i. ch. xi. 10).

Dante does not blame the fear: he blames the weakness which yields to the fear: the fear is the result of sensitiveness, a quality which has its value, but which needs to be kept under control by some higher impulse of the soul. And this leads me to speak of Dante's sensitiveness of disposition. Constantly we meet with indications of this sensitiveness. He acknowledges in set terms his own quick susceptibleness to the influence of environment.

> "Io, che pur di mia natura
> Trasmutabile son per tutte guise!"
> (*Par.* v. 98, 99.)

So susceptible is he, that he feels what he describes, and feels at the moment just what he would feel were the imagined fact a true one: the imaginary fact calls up identically the same feelings as the real fact. This invests the narrative with naturalness.

This sensitiveness shows itself in his keenly sympathetic response to Nature. There are some critics who write as though Nature poetry were an invention of the romantic school. We may all welcome the love of Nature which breathed in Burns, Shelley, Keats, and Wordsworth; but we may recall poets of an earlier age whose souls were filled with the joy which earth and sky and

tree and flood and flower can evoke. The Hebrew was a Nature poet when he said, "The river of God is full of water"; when he described the kindly act of providence, "Thou sendest rain into the valleys thereof; Thou makest it soft with the drops of rain: the hills rejoice on every side: the valleys stand so thick with corn that they laugh and sing." The reader of the Psalms will recall many other examples, and he must be dead to Nature's appeal who does not feel the exquisite and varying beauty of the great Nature hymn which is numbered 104 in our version of the Psalms. We owe much to the romantic school, but the hearts of poets had responded to Nature long before Cowper. Indeed, may we not say that this responsiveness to Nature marks all the greater poets? It certainly marks Dante Alighieri. We have seen with what tender feeling he pictures the tiny flowers smitten by the night's frost, and with what a joyous sympathy he marks them raising their heads, restored to living beauty by the genial beams of the sun. We have noted the way in which season and hour seem responsive to his mood. For example, at the moment when he is about to commence his wondrous journey to the underworld, he pictures the earthly conditions as those calculated to awaken apprehension in one to whom Nature strongly

appealed. He enters upon this arduous adventure at an hour when all things around him were pleading for rest and quiet. Night was at hand, and evening was whispering her tale of a well-deserved interval of peace; all Nature was sinking to slumber, and this enterprise along untrodden ways seemed to set him as a lonely alien upon the earth when all other creatures were claiming their repose:

"Now did God's day grow dim,
And brown the shadowed air,
And o'er the twilight's rim
The happy beasts repair
To their sweet rest—while I,
Left sunless and alone
To meet an untold agony,
Stept into shades unknown."
(*Inf.* ii. 1–4.)

He feels the step into the unknown, and the thought of the oncoming night heightens his emotion.

The appeal of the evening hour weaves a powerful spell over the poet's heart. We meet the acknowledgment of its potent spell in the *Purgatorio*, as we meet it here in the *Inferno*:

"Now came the yearning hour
When on the lonely sea

Men feel the farewell power
And fain at home would be;
When love fresh weaves her spell
As the lights melt away,
And o'er the eve a bell
Tolls for the dying day."
(*Purg.* viii. 1–6.)

And as to sweet seasons, so to sweet sounds also the poet's heart responds. He breaks his story to tell us how when he met Casella, whose skill in music had power to assuage all his cares (*Purg.* ii. 103), he wooed him again to sing:

"Met in the milder shades of Purgatory."

And once again, when one sang the compline hymn, Dante tells how all his sense in ravishment was lost:

"Che fece me a me uscir di mente."
(*Purg.* viii. 15.)

But the sensitiveness which the poet reveals is not responsive only to the appeals of sight and sound. It is a sensitiveness of a yet nobler kind —a sensitiveness which feels keenly for others. Thus he tells us that when he saw in Purgatory those whose eyes were fast sewn with wire— it seemed to him an outrage to look upon

those thus humiliated and who could not return his gaze :

" A me pareva andando fare oltraggio,
Veggendo altrui, non essendo veduto :
Perch' io mi volsi." (*Purg.* xiii. 73–75.)

(" To gaze then seemed to me
An outrage e'en that burned.
From these who could not see
Therefore away I turned.")

Exactly in the same spirit, which cannot endure to take advantage of a superior position or by thoughtlessness to add one pang to those who suffer, Dante meets in the *Inferno* the shade of his former mentor, Brunetto Latini : the fiery way forbids him to descend to the burning ground whereon Brunetto walks : he must keep to the raised and safe causeway, yet he will not look down upon the parched and fire-smirched face of his friend : he will walk beside him with averted gaze and reverent head :

" Io non osava scender della strada
Per andar par di lui : ma il capo chino
Tenea, come uom che reverente vada."
(*Inf.* xv. 43–45.)

(" To walk with him below
I dared not to descend ;
Therefore with head bent low
I held him reverend.")

In harmony with such high sensitiveness, he describes sensations which are indicative of certain nervous conditions. He knows moments when he longs to relieve himself by speech, but fears to do so lest he should offend his guide :

" Allor con gli occhi vergognosi e bassi,
Temendo no 'l mio dir gli fusse grave,
Infino al fiume di parlar mi trassi."
(*Inf.* iii. 79–81.)

(" With eyes shame-cast and low,
Fearing my silly speech,
All silent did I go
Till we the stream did reach.")

He knows also the moments when sheer weakness makes men talkative :

" Parlando andava per non parer fievole."
(*Inf.* xxiv. 64.)

(" Talking I went to veil fatigue.")

He has insight enough to realise that quick sensitiveness is morally useful : it brings pain, but it carries its healing with it : to feel swift shame mount to the brow is at least to be alive to one's own weakness.

When Virgil rebukes him for pausing to listen to the vulgar wrangle between two abject souls—Sinon and Adamo of Brescia—a burning blush

suffused his face and a poignant shame filled his whole soul. It is well, Virgil assures him: his confusion is a healthy sign: the very sensitiveness is a wholesome self-rebuke: it carries healing with it:

"Una medesma lingua pria mi morse,
Sì che mi tinse l' una e l' altra guancia,
E poi la medicina mi riporse.
Così od' io che soleva la lancia
D' Achille e del suo padre esser cagione
Prima di trista e poi di buona mancia."
(*Inf.* xxxi. 1–6.)

("The very tongue, whose keen reproof before
Had wounded me, that either cheek was stain'd,
Now minister'd my cure. So have I heard,
Achilles' and his father's javelin caused
Pain first, and then the boon of health restored.")

He can honour this ready sensitiveness; it is the sign of a worthy and lively moral sense. Virgil's conscience he describes as "dignitosa coscienza e netta"; clear and upright, because it feels a small fault like a grievous wound:

"Come t' è picciol fallo amaro morso!"
(*Purg.* iii. 8, 9.)

Allied with this sensitiveness we may place his almost intolerant dislike of ungraceful or undignified deportment. He commends what is calm

and self-possessed : he deprecates the haste which mars all decency of act :

"La fretta,
Che l' onestade ad ogni atto dismaga."
(*Purg.* iii. 11.)

The great ones are always grave and deliberate : their very speech bears this characteristic grace :

"Parlavan rado, con voce soavi."
(*Inf.* iv. 114.)

Their eyes had none of the irritability of impatient littleness of soul : their aspect was one of weighty authority :

"Genti v' eran con occhi tardi e gravi,
Di grande autorità ne' lor sembianti."
(*Inf.* iv. 112.)

Similarly Sordello, whose attitude is like that of a couchant lion, moves his eyes with a slow majesty (*Purg.* vi. 63).

Everywhere the great and good in the poem are distinguished by graciousness and quiet dignity. The voices of the saints in Paradise possess sweetness and gravity. Solomon speaks in sober tones (*Par.* xiv. 35) : Cacciaguida's voice is sweet and soft (*Par.* xvi. 32). In contrast the voices in the evil realm are harsh, discordant, inhuman : the voices of pain and anger, re-

morse and despair, or else of deadly and impotent hate :

" Quivi sospiri, pianti ed alti guai
Risonavan per l' aer senza stelle,
Perch' io al cominciar ne lagrimai.
Diverse lingue, orribili favelle,
Parole di dolore, accenti d' ira,
Voci alte e fioche, e suon di man con elle."
(*Inf.* iii. 22–27.)

(" Here sighs, with lamentations and loud moans,
Resounded through the air pierced by no star,
That e'en I wept at entering. Various tongues,
Horrible languages, outcries of woe,
Accents of anger, voices deep and hoarse,
With hands together smote.")

The *Inferno* is a region robbed of light and music : harsh and hideous cries resound. In silence Minos passes dread sentence (*Inf.* v. 4–6), Cerberus barks as a dog baying for his food (*Inf.* vi. 13–27), Pluto shrieks at the passer-by with a hard and grating voice (*Inf.* vii. 1–3). The very way in which the poet pictures the harsh discords of this lower world makes us feel how he rejoiced in all that was sweet and gracious, sane and dignified.

Ruskin, after his manner, remarks that Dante was a bad climber : according to him, Dante's idea of Alpine travel is only that of difficult walking :

he disliked steep and rugged paths. But was it the difficulty which Dante disliked? Was it not rather that he had a proud distaste for ungraceful haste, and the necessity which compelled some undignified attitude? More than the arduous road, he hated all that caused unseemliness of pose or bearing. The rhythm of his nature demanded grace and stately movement; haste which obliged him to hurry along steep and rocky paths overthrew all dignity of deportment. It was not physical fatigue which he resented, but unworthy disturbance of the harmony and grace of life.

We have dwelt on the fastidious sensitiveness of Dante's character, but we must not dwell on it longer lest we conjure up a false or one-sided picture of him. In contrast to this sensitiveness of spirit, we may place his apparent and perhaps real sternness of character. This man of such exquisite feeling, such warm delight in all that is sweet and graceful, has another side to his character. He is level-minded in his demand for rectitude. When righteousness is at stake, neither pity nor partiality must be allowed to sway the judgment.

This does not mean that he banishes pity from his heart (*Inf.* xx. 25–31). On the contrary, the pangs of pity, which his sensitive soul feels for the forlorn and tormented spirits in

the *Inferno*, serve to show how intense is his conviction that nothing can set aside the laws of eternal right. Francesca will arouse in him infinite and overwhelming compassion, but Francesca must face the withering tempest which her fault has aroused against her. Mr J. A. Symonds expressed his wonder that Dante should be so hard and pitiless in his judgment upon the weaklings who hesitated to identify themselves on either side in the great battle of all time. Others may have felt that the harsh contempt expressed by the poet was out of proportion to a fault which might be called weakness, but never vice; but to Dante the cowardice which refused the call of high duty or noble ideal was sin almost beyond forgiveness: it revealed a spirit dead to righteousness through the paralysing influence of self-interest.

In modern days we understand the hesitation of the thoughtful who are too honest in mind to identify themselves with any of the clamouring parties which struggle for mastery; but hesitation of this class had small place in mediæval times and was far from Dante's thought. He was thinking of the trumpet call of righteousness summoning men to war against wrong. In that war he could recognise no discharge: to shirk was to proclaim oneself unworthy of the noble

gift of life. His scorn for these self-interested souls was akin to his conviction of the imperiously righteous order under which men lived. We must reckon with this unswerving faith in right in estimating the character of Dante.

What, then, is the resultant portrait of Dante left on our minds? As I see him, he is sensitive, fastidious, hating what was slovenly and ungraceful; demanding even in little things a correctness in detail (witness his handwriting, described as fine and careful); taking a genuine delight in things beautiful, pausing long to observe them; rejoicing in music, and therefore spending long hours in the shop of Bellacqua; finding pleasure in art, and so on terms of friendship with Giotto; watching the slow growth of the tower of the Cathedral, as it grew "like a tall lily pointing heavenward"; finding relaxation in sketching, perhaps an angel; tender-hearted to the weak, passing with a gentle smile children at their play; impatient of fools, yet slow of speech because strong in self-restraint: speaking clearly and incisively where speech was needful; easily moved by the sorrows of others, and, while keeping a gravely placid countenance, feeling with exquisite inward torture some tragedy of life. We can picture him studying long and carefully; reading omnivorously and appropriat-

ing with ready memory and judicious skill all that seemed to bear the mark of truth. He was often stern to men, but courteous, even gaily courteous, to women; proud with the pride that will do no discourtesy to self through lack of reticence; proud, too, with a patience which bears much which shallow conceit might resent. He was orthodox according to the orthodoxy of his day, because too sane to fling overboard what was useful and might be true; reverent therefore towards the Church, but so full of great ideals that he could utter the strongest rebukes against those who prostituted her authority; a lover of truth, he would discard teaching which sinned against its canons; possessing a heart susceptible and responsive to the appeal of beauty, and still more of kindliness, and therefore able to delight in life and life's pleasures; yet shy and sensitive, and at times painfully self-restrained, he is, by consequence, a man by whom the vicissitudes of life will be keenly felt; believing in good, he will find it hard should he meet with falseness in men; giving his whole heart, though with a proud reserve, he will feel acutely should his affection be wounded or his confidence betrayed. He is a man of such a disposition that we should hope for him days of brightness and happiness, of faithful friends and loving comrades, sunshine

that would melt away all reserve, assured success that would make him lay aside his defensive pride. A man, tender-hearted, sensitive, fastidious, reserved, proud, ambitious, unselfish in aim though ambitious in desire, he is to go out into the world and meet such fortune as may come to him and such experience as will work upon his character for good or evil.

There is in such a soul infinite capacity for gladness and for sorrow! To what heights of joy may he not attain? What tortures of soul may he not endure?

Such is Dante. The world waits, ready to open her doors to him. What love will minister to him? What fortune will crown him? What will life do for him? What message will life put into his lips to deliver to his fellow-men?

LECTURE II

THE DRAMA OF HIS LIFE
(LIFE LOST)

THE life of Dante falls into three periods—the period of youthful dream, the period of the dream of his manhood, and the period of the divine vision. These three periods are like three acts of a drama, the drama of Dante's life. The first two acts close with the vanishing of a dream ; the third act brings the vision which never fades. The first act ends with the death of Beatrice, the second with the exile from Florence. Like the life of the patriarch, the earlier periods are marked by dreams : and Dante's life, like Jacob's, is a drama told in three acts, and in both cases the drama closes in exile.

It is this drama of Dante's life which we have to follow.

The first act opens with the life in his early home. The first influence in normal human life is that of love. We do not understand this in our

early years. Later, as we look back, we begin to perceive the sanctities of affection which surrounded our infancy. Later life often drives us to practical or philosophic views of existence. Hard facts meet us. The need of some rationalised harmony presses upon our minds, and we are tempted to attach exaggerated importance to logical or practical wisdom; but the early influences have played their part, they have been formative powers in our development. In the busy conflict of toil and thought we may forget, but in the hour of emergency or of enforced idleness, when retrospect wields her enchanted wand, we feel and we know that love has been in our lives—a real and an unforgetable power.

Was it not so with Dante? Though reason asserted her sway, though he was claimed by sorrow as her child, and grief and disappointment wrote the marks of suffering upon his face, his heart cherished as an inexhaustible treasure the memory of love.

It has been the fashion to suppose that his early home life lacked the affection which becomes so rich and sweet a memory as years increase. The case is not proven; and some facts may be urged in support of an opposite conclusion. We are dealing admittedly with a matter upon which our knowledge is incomplete, and each man's views

are probably coloured by his partialities, but there does not appear to me to be adequate ground for picturing the child life of Dante Alighieri in sombre hues.

Let us see how the matter stands. Dante was born in 1265. He lost both father and mother before he reached manhood. His mother, Bella by name, died when Dante was about twelve years of age. For the first twelve years of his life Dante knew both a mother's and a father's care. The five or six years which followed his mother's death—the years which brought him to the threshold of adolescence—were years in which things had changed : his father had married again, and other children's voices were heard in the home ; but, if conjecture be true, these voices were not unwelcome to Dante : at any rate, to one of his half-sisters he became strongly attached.

Beyond these scanty materials we have little to tell us the story of Dante's early life. We can lay our hands on none of those domestic records, family letters or family diaries, which, like windows, give us a clear though passing glimpse into the home. Here inference has been busy, and there have been writers who have read the silence of history as equivalent to condemnation. It has been assumed that where little is said, much trouble and some dislike may be inferred.

Because Dante does not speak or write much of his father or his mother, it has been imagined that little love existed between them. This appears to me a criticism not only unjust, but lacking in sympathetic perception. If little cares speak and great ones are dumb, it may also chance that shallow love chatters and deep love is silent. Men do not always give prominence to their strongest affections : a sense of sacredness belongs to such affections, they impose a loyal reticence. The love which speaks may be silver : but the love which is silent may be golden. Do we admire Dante Gabriel Rossetti more when he buried his poems in his wife's grave or when he dragged them out to publish them ? Must we suppose that Cowper loved his mother more than other poets because he paid her the tribute of his immortal eulogy ? Men love Cowper's poem because it expresses what they themselves have felt : the popularity of those poems which proclaim the sorrows of an aching or bereaved heart is the witness how many silent folk there are who, being deprived of the gift of utterance, welcome verses which put into beautiful or noble language the thoughts and emotions which thousands feel and find no way to express. Many, moreover, of those gifted with power of utterance shrink from putting into the fierce light of publicity the

expressions of their deepest feelings. No inference of a lack of affection is justifiable from the mere fact of silence.

Dante by temperament was reticent. He appears to me like one brought up in a home in which sentimental affection did not gush out in speech, but in which genuine love, nevertheless, was forcibly felt. The family was comparatively poor: they could not meet their rich neighbours on equal terms; but they had some pride of lineage: they cherished the memory of their ancestors, and they often spoke of one who had fought and fallen amongst the crusaders. Cynics might perhaps indulge a shrewd suspicion that he was probably the only ancestor of marked distinction of whom the family could boast. But families which cherish this pride of ancestry, possess also corresponding ideals of conduct and achievement. We know that such ideals grew in Dante's mind. "Loyalty, courtesy, love, courage, self-control," he says, "are necessary to this age." With these ideals, reverence for womanhood held a place. The modest and noble man could never speak in such a manner that to a woman his words should be such as she should not hear. The picture, therefore, which rises to our minds is of a home in which chivalrous ideals are held in high esteem, and in which tales of ancient valour and

high hopes of future glory find a place. Such a home is not usually a loveless one.

Again, the home was one in which dreams of greatness grew. We are told that before his birth his mother had a dream which betokened his future greatness. She dreamed that her offspring was a peacock. The story may be apocryphal, but stories of this kind do not circulate round an unwelcome child or arise in the atmosphere of an unhappy home: the fact that such a tale became current does not support the conjecture of home unhappiness. Again, Dante has a strong confidence in his destiny: he takes keen interest in the star under which he was born:

> "O glorious stars, O light impregnated
> With mighty virtue, from which I acknowledge
> All of my genius, whatsoe'er it be,
> With you was born, and hid himself with you,
> He who is father of all mortal life,
> When first I tasted of the Tuscan air."
>
> (*Par.* xxii. 112–117.)

Are we not in the presence of a man who early believed that he was born for high things? May we not conjecture that some relics of a mother's hope and pride are preserved to us in the legend and in the strong faith of the poet in his own destiny? Perhaps, after all, visions and hopes full of fair augury met the child who was ushered into

life in the month of May when earth was radiant with Nature's comeliest beauties and breathed all the sweet joyousness of the flowery spring.

If so, more sweet and joyous than spring was the mother's face which hung over the cradle as May ebbed and June broke with richer leafage over Florence. I cannot therefore share the views of those who think that home love in the poet's childhood was scant. It is true that Dante tells no touching story of his infant life, and only in one casual line does he refer directly to his mother. There is a studied reserve in his writings: he does not darken sanctities with song. But do we not catch here and there revelations more telling, because indirect, of the deep, tender emotion which home-scenes and home-thoughts awakened in his breast? Like fossils in the rock, touching remembrances of childhood's experiences are found imbedded in the immortal poem. Does no memory lie behind the picture he draws of Florentine homes in the days of peace?

"L' una vegghiava a studio della culla,
E consolando usava l' idioma
Che prima i padri e le madri trastulla."[1]
(*Par.* xv. 121–123.)

[1] "One o'er the cradle kept her studious watch,
And in her lullaby the language used
That first delights the fathers and the mothers."
LONGFELLOW'S Translation.

And when he describes the mother relating legends of famous cities, is he not recalling some early memory?

Did no warm throb of early life inspire his mind when he pictured Virgil's welcome embrace, as told in the eighth canto of the *Inferno*? As Virgil expressed his approval of Dante's scorn of Filippo Argenti, do we not feel that the whole scene is filled with the mingled pride and tenderness with which a mother embraces the child whose action has satisfied her hopes?

"Lo collo poi con le braccia mi cinse,
Baciommi il volto, e disse: Alma sdegnosa!"

This, too, is the very passage in which Dante refers to his mother, for he represents Virgil as calling her blessed:

"Benedetta colei che in te s' incinse."
(*Inf.* viii. 43–45.)

Would it be venturing too hazardous a conjecture, then, if we pictured to ourselves Dante as a yellow-haired child, sitting by his mother's knee as she plied the distaff and drew out the thread, his face all aglow with attentive interest as he heard the tale of some deed of heroism wrought on the fields of Troy, or in Fiesole or Rome?

Was it not a home picture which he drew when he wrote—

"Another, drawing tresses from her distaff,
Told o'er among her family the tales
Of Trojans and of Fiesole and Rome."
(*Par.* xv. 124–126.)

But whatever part love may have played in the early life of Dante has been flung into the background by the intense and varied interest which attaches to the name of Beatrice. In her Dante found that transcendent influence which for weal or woe woman exercises over man. A recent German writer has told us that it is impossible to mention Dante to any educated German without calling up the thought of Goethe; for in *Faust* as well as in the *Divina Commedia* we meet the "Ewig Weibliche" (Eternal Womanly) power which leads man on. Both poets have paid their tribute to woman's influence; but Dante's work is a tribute to Beatrice which soars far beyond the level reached in *Faust.*

Beatrice is in Dante's life something which poor Marguerite could not be in the life of Faust. To Beatrice belongs the magic which transfigures the poet himself. No such transfiguration as we meet in the *Divine Comedy* could find place in any version of the Faustus legend. It is a transfiguration of eternal significance.

To understand what Beatrice was to Dante, we must enter into the temper of the time. The

position which woman occupies in public esteem at any particular epoch of history may be taken as a measure of the spirit of the age. Human progress is not like a straight line leading upwards, it is rather an undulating line, like those which mark the progress of some commercial enterprise, on which are marked receding as well as advancing indications of fortune. Just as in the story of national trade the value attached to some one commodity is often taken as a gauge of general prosperity, so the regard in which woman is held may be taken to mark the high and low water-mark of civilisation and progress. Measured in this way, we have to admit fluctuations as we pass from age to age, and indeed from nation to nation or even creed to creed.

We, who were brought up on romances in which love played a leading part, can hardly understand a literature in which woman's influence found practically no place. Yet in the literature of Greece how small a thing is woman! It has been said that there is no heroine in the *Iliad*. True, a woman was at the bottom of the mischief, but there is no love-story in the poem. The heroes pass before us—Achilles, Agamemnon, Hector, Patroclus, and a host more,—but love does not play a part in their lives. Briseis may be contended for, but who is in love with her?

A young and promising scholar said that there was indeed a love-story in the *Iliad*, but it was the story of love between two men : no woman brought Achilles from his tent. It was when he heard that Patroclus had fallen that the hero sprang to arms. Love, romantic love, as we know it—for example, the love of Romeo and Juliet, or Lorenzo and Jessica,—finds no place in the plays of Æschylus, Sophocles, or Euripides.

It has been maintained that "the first man who had the courage to say that a woman is worth loving,—was Antimachus of Colophon."[1] Prior to his day, the idea of love—*i.e.* of the beautiful romantic love of which later literature is full—was unknown, or at least unrecognised among the poets. "That anyone should have taken the trouble to devote erudition and elaboration to the praise of a woman, would have been an unheard-of thing in early Greece."[2] The love which holds a pre-eminence in the early classic days of Greece is love between man and man. The high, elevating love for a woman—the pure, unselfish devotion which we associate with the word "romantic"—had no place among her greater poets. This does not mean that there were no portraits of noble women presented in the glorious

[1] *Women in Greek Poetry*, by E. F. M. Benecke, p. 2, 1896.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 70.

days of Greece; but it does mean that the idea of a chivalrous reverence for womanhood, apart from the comforts which her presence conferred, had not in those days found its voice.

With the growth of asceticism there came, according to Mr Lecky, a fashion of thought which lowered the status and dignity of womanhood. "Woman was represented as the door of hell, as the mother of all human ills. . . . Their essentially subordinate position was continually maintained."[1] Canon law reflected this view, and it was for this reason that Sir Henry Maine held that the expositors of canon law had done injury to civilisation.[2]

With the romantic movement, womanhood once more was given a high place in the thought of man. Poets began to sing the praises of women: their beauty was no longer denounced as a danger: it was celebrated in song. Devotion to womanhood became fashionable: the knight, wearing his lady's favour, went proudly into combat. It became recognised that man could draw a strong and inspiring incentive to noble doing and self-mastery in life, from the pure and worshipful affection he bore to the woman he reverenced.

Here we betake ourselves into that realm of

[1] *European Morals*, vol. ii. p. 338. [2] *Ancient Law*, p. 158.

love which was so dear to the knighthood and chivalry of the times. We need not trace the idea of love as it was conceived by the Provençal schools. Among them no doubt there was a tendency to fall to the level of intrigue ; in the view of some the lover was the man faithful in unfaithfulness : " C'etait la fidélité dans l'adultère."[1] It is enough for us to realise that whatever may have been the moral standard of the Provençal singers, the Florentine school rose to a higher level, and founded a school of love which bore the shield of a lofty purity. The love of the poets became pure, almost impersonal ; its object was beauty, or womanhood personified in an ideal being. The notion of marriage or possession hardly entered their thoughts ; the mistress whom they praised was for them a being—almost a divinity—to be worshipped on bended knee.[2]

The love which in earlier times had expressed itself in rough and rude fashion, became delicate and worshipful. The ideal celebrated is not that of the woman free in her favours ; it is that of maiden purity and Madonna-like aloofness, whose salutation is a benediction.

" Beata l' alma che questa saluta."

[1] *Danté, Béatrice et la poésie amoureuse*, R. de Gourmont, p. 29, Paris, 1908.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 31.

So sang Lapo Gianni. Her smile spreads gladness: a sweet virtue goes forth from her: her presence banishes vice: she is exalted high in the poet's thoughts. It is the canonisation of womanhood which meets us: she is something beyond desire, something which one can scarcely dare to love; or, if love at all, it must be with a love which rises pure and fragrant like incense to her throne. Love itself is felt to be an exalted sentiment, a gift divine which can only enter into hearts worthy to receive it.

Thus, according to Lapo degli Uberti, not only is the lady to be reverenced, but love itself is a lofty gift which comes only to the worthy:

"Gentil Madonna, la vertù d' amore
Che per grazia discende
In core humano, sel trova gentile. . . ." [1]

("Worthy lady, love's dear virtue
Cometh only of God's grace;
Entereth the human heart,
Which provides a worthy place.")

The spirit of such words is far removed from that of wanton intrigue. Imagination here turns only to what is pure and lovely and of good report. It is closely allied to the mystic temperament, which was making its way among the

[1] De Gourmont, p. 34.

choicer spirits of the age. It presents to us the ideal woman; but its origin is the influence of some dear, pure, gentle creature whose presence and smile awoke to consciousness the slumbering powers of the heart. In the poetical celebration of her influence, the imagination and the affections collaborated and wrought a portrait, endowed with perfections unattainable. The likeness is idealised, but it is not a fiction: there is flesh and blood behind it: a true human charm gave it birth: a little reality mingled with a good deal of dream, "a drop of elixir in a glass of spring-water."

The power of her presence and its effects upon the lover are described, and they resemble those which Dante describes in the *Vita Nuova*. The salute of the lady awakens a deep fear in the lover: his face changes colour: he trembles before her. "As the leaf trembles before every breeze, so do I tremble at her presence," was the description given by Brunetto Latini. The very beauty of the beloved one caused a shiver to pass through the frame, till one poet[1] exclaimed that the man who knew no trembling knew no love:

"Ch' uomo senza temere
Non par che sia amoroso
Che amar senza temer non si convene."

[1] Rainieri da Palermo.

("Who feareth not, he loveth not,
So seemeth it to me;
Certes the love that lacketh fear
A true love cannot be.")

Thus love which began with a vision of simple girlish beauty could grow into a noble worship of something greater and fairer than earth could claim. Woman became the inspiration of man, and led him to dreams beyond her own power to realise; but ideal, and often celestial, as were these visions, and far above her reach, yet from her sweet influence they sprang. She, who cannot attain perchance to the heights to which her lover has exalted her, may rejoice in having exalted a human heart so high.

"O sacred be the flesh and blood
To which she links a truth divine."

If we have entered into the spirit of these times, and if we can picture to ourselves a young man, sensitive to beauty and to the idealising appeals of young girlhood, versed too in the romantic literary fashion of the times, we shall the better understand the spirit in which Dante regarded Beatrice. He saw her, not with the eager desire of possession, but with the timid and trembling reverence of one who regarded woman as a right worshipful being. It was not even the maiden

passion for a maid: it was the tender awe of purity, the longing to protect, the instinct to worship, the dread to offend, the fear to intrude, the sense of personal unworthiness, conjoined with eagerness to serve.

The emotions of which Dante was conscious were thus beautiful and powerful: they brought warmth and elevation of soul. They are like pictures of the early morning: they are as ardent as sunrise and as pure as the dew before the dawn.

So let the morning freshness of this love of Dante for Beatrice breathe its fragrance upon us. He saw her—a dainty child, clad in crimson, garlanded, and adorned (*Vita Nuova*, § ii.). She eight years old: he nine. Writers have called him precocious to have loved thus young: I do not like the word: it seems to me to anticipate, and to miss the mark. Have we never noticed the fascination felt by a little boy in the presence of some vision of bright girlish childhood? Have we never known the happy, delicious, and innocent fancies of an hour like this? Such is not a time to read future meanings into life's scenes: this is joyous childhood, delighting in what is sweet and beautiful: and life, all unknown to it, is laying the foundations of chivalrous action and reverent thinking. The knowledge of the future is concealed from childhood, but the thrill of a

new experience may belong to it. When the experience of that passing thrill is recalled in later years, it will be described in the language of later life and will be charged with stronger emotion than childhood could compass: later life interprets as it narrates such experiences.

After such a fashion we must understand Dante's own account, when he says that "at that instant the spirit of life, which dwelleth in the most secret chamber of the heart, began to tremble with such violence that it appeared fearfully in the least pulses, and, trembling, said these words: 'Ecce Deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi'" (*Vita Nuova*, § ii. 25). Such are the words of Dante, written some years later: they convey the record of the fact that the sight of the little child's beauty thrilled him, awoke a sense of awe, and made him aware of a power in life, which came to take possession of his soul. And yet the experience was scarcely one of dread. It was one of delight: it whispered to him of happiness: "apparuit jam beatitudo vestra," so he translated his feelings in later days. And then, as a resultant of a fear which was also a joy, the child-heart was able to realise that this experience might bring new trouble: the emotions were stirred: the bright vision of the child could not always be with him: he must leave the

new-found palace of enchantment. Looking back, he puts into words, more pregnant of meaning than his childlike experience could have grasped, "Heu miser! quia frequenter impeditus ero deinceps."

We must remember that the emotions felt were those of a child of nine: the narrative which describes them is the work of a man of twenty-four or twenty-five. As he writes the story of impressions which were very vivid in his child-life he reads into them more than was possible to the consciousness of the child: he is now interpreter as well as narrator, and it is impossible for him to report as a child would what he felt. What he describes are the emotions of a fuller consciousness: what he is narrating is the first gush of the river from its mountain spring: what he describes is the movement of the water as it gathers force in its descent. It is all most true; but the emotion felt was emotion, as it were, in the cradle: the emotion described is emotion which is struggling out of the cradle, but the baby is the same, and Dante is quite correct and truthful in attributing to that hour the dawn of the one dominating passion of his life. "From this time forward I say that love lorded it over my soul" (*Vita Nuova*, § ii. 38).

By the golden thread of love Dante was led onward and upward to its transfiguration. He

presents us later with a transfigured Beatrice. The Beatrice whom we meet in the poem is different from the Beatrice whom Dante saw as a bright and smiling girl walking the streets of Florence. She is Beatrice, *loda di dio vera*, the true praise of God. She is Beatrice who can fix her unblenching eyes upon the sun in heaven (*Par.* i. 46–48). She is Beatrice who bids St James cause hope to sound in heaven (*Par.* xxv. 28–31). She is Beatrice who sits enthroned, as befits her worth, with Rachel in the third circle of the Mystic Rose (*Par.* xxxii. 9). She has passed out of the realm of Dante's youthful dreams: she has moved upward: she has been transfigured with light. She can be stern as a mother rebuking a wayward child (*Purg.* xxx. 79–81). She can pour invigorating and uplifting power into the spirit of the pilgrim who goes heavenward (*Par.* i. 64–72). She is endowed with a vigour and splendour which set her among celestials. The beauty and grace of the fair lady whose salutation made Dante glad have been lost in a glory more excellent.

According to the critics, the Beatrice of the *Divina Commedia* is Theology. There is, of course, truth in this, but is there not something bald and prosaic in thus abruptly dismissing the Beatrice of Florence and substituting for her Theology? To

another age than ours such discontinuity of transition may have appealed; but are we satisfied that the poetical harmony, so indispensable even where the spirit of allegory is present, has been maintained in such a case? Does it satisfy our psychological judgment or the demands of the poetical argument? Must there not be some intermediate steps through which the transition was effected. If we are sure that the most widely deflected ray is violet and the least is red, are we not also sure that these are colours which melt insensibly into one another and so cause the violet to be transformed into red by a pathway of changing and beautiful hues? In the same way we must feel that whatever the Beatrice of the *Paradiso* stood for, Dante did not suddenly set aside the Beatrice of his youth and put in her place an allegorical figure: the changes came insensibly, as the changes in the rainbow hue.

Love stirred his soul: love was to be his master. Beatrice, the fair lady of Florence, first inspired the conviction that love must be the guiding star of his life; but death came, and the smile of Beatrice no longer made sunshine in the streets of Florence. She had been translated to heaven: she had become "the youngest of the angels" (*Vita Nuova*, xxxiv. can. 4). Thus the love which had dawned on earth was now in

heaven. Beatrice became associated with a love which was celestial. Dante might feel for her what a devout soul felt for a patron saint; but a special tenderness born of undying memories, in this case, mingled with reverent devoutness. Other experiences came: the cares of life, home anxieties, public responsibilities, great political aims and hopes: the longing to make Florence—none the less dear that it was the city of his Beatrice—a praise upon earth. Would not she from above smile with approval of his high and unselfish ambitions? Beatrice grows with the enlarging horizon of Dante's life: she is the background of every picture which his fancy paints: she draws to herself every changing aspect of Dante's ideal. When he takes to study; when, driven forth from his first refuge at Verona, he supports himself by teaching, and studies philosophy at Bologna, at Padua, and at Paris, when he seeks intellectual wisdom in Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, and Boethius, the wisdom sought blends with the memory of Beatrice; she was the lady who had so changed him, "quella Donna che m' avea mutato" (*Convito*, bk. iii. ch. i.). When he writes of language, and seeks to confute those who disparaged the language of Italy (*Convito*, bk. i. ch. x.), he tells us that he loves this language of *Si* for itself, for its goodness, and also because it was speech used by those

who were dear to him (*Convito*, bk. i. ch. xiii.). Can we doubt that the tongue was all the dearer to him because it was that in which Beatrice spoke? Must he not be eloquent on behalf of that speech in which she expressed herself? He loves this tongue with a most perfect love (*ibid.*). Whether, therefore, he defended his native language, or enlarged the range of his studies, Beatrice seems to preside over his life and thoughts.

Then arises the final change in his search for wisdom. It is now no longer an abstract or philosophical wisdom which he seeks: he desires now the wisdom of life, the wisdom which descends from above: the wisdom which is not made, which cannot be discovered by argument, but the wisdom which is created by love: the wisdom whose abode is in the bosom of God, whose activities are the activities of mercy and pity, whose guidance is the guidance of a love which seeks at all costs the highest good of what it loves. Such a love and wisdom there was: it dwelt in heaven, but it sought and saved him wandering on earth, lost in the entangling forest and unable to climb the hill of gladness (*Inf.* i. 78). This divine wisdom, which is also love, he will call by the name of Beatrice: it is Beatrice, then, who descends from her high throne in heaven and hastens to his rescue (*Inf.* ii. 61–70). He has found that the highest

wisdom can only be reached through grace: not ardent study, not long nights of reading, not wide searching out of the histories of philosophers: the word is nigh thee and in thy heart. Love, which entered so powerfully into his life that it was henceforth to be his lord, has been his guide all through and must be to the end. Was it not love divine which first awakened his heart through Beatrice to realise its magic and purifying and uplifting power? Was he ever left without love's guidance, help, and inspiration? Was not Beatrice the first to reveal that love which was far greater than herself? Has not his life been always under the guardianship of a love, of which Beatrice was but a manifestation? The love which shone through her was the heavenly real, of which Beatrice for one glad sad hour was the earthly sign. Did not Beatrice pass into heaven to show him that there in heaven was the real source of that love which could uplift, purge, and satisfy the soul!

Thus through various phases of experience Beatrice—a bright, pure, real fact in his life—slowly assumed, without completely losing her youthful winsomeness, the picture and image of that wisdom which love only and love always is bestowing upon man.

It seems to me that we have lost much by not realising the sacredness of life's actual experiences:

we separate them from heavenly notions. We draw a hard line between that which happens to us and the things of God; but that which happens to us is of God. The dear love which first aroused in us a chivalrous spirit by unselfish devotion, which demanded our protection and which commanded our reverence, was not this God's messenger to us? It is only our poor narrow minds which submit to the tyranny of time and space, which hinder our perception of the diviner influences of life. The hills about us are filled with chariots of God, and the angels of God do visit our homes; but we, alas! only see their earthly vesture and their transient garments. Accordingly, we argue whether Beatrice stood as an allegorical figure of Authority or Theology, whereas Dante, looking upon this life, saw God in it all. He beheld the ladder: he marked the angels: he cried, "Behold, God is in this place and I knew it not": and so he beheld the house of God and the gate of heaven, and he called the divine wisdom and love by the name which first awoke him to the possibilities of life outside himself. With sweet memories of early dreams mingling with deep conviction of eternal realities, he was glad to call her Beatrice as the one from whom alike the dawn and the all-comprehending consummation of happiness flowed.

Here I might close; but viewing life, as I am compelled to do, as a wonderful order of divine education, I want to claim for love, as we meet it on earth, a nobler place than is assigned to it by minds saturated with material views. Lust is passion divorced from love. We may degrade our passions by judging them as though they were purely animal. What is needed is to lift them into heaven. There is something Godlike in love: what is Godlike must not be converted into flesh; but what is manlike should be taken into God. The fluctuations in the fashion of love in mediæval times show how the ideal of love may oscillate between the degradation of its diviner elements and a consecration which lifted it into the bosom of God. This last is the love which is exemplified in the love of Dante for Beatrice. She was to him the divine ideal of that sweet womanly influence which dignifies and elevates human life and gives to love a divine beauty and a purifying power. As Donne sang:

> "No more can impure man retain and move
> In that pure region of a worthy love,
> Than earthly substance can unforced aspire
> And leave its nature to converse with fire."

There is a spirit which can see the glory of the natural order, because it can see it in God: the

earth and all that is in it lies in the embrace of a divine love : all things fair are doubly fair because seen in Him. The baseness comes of looking at things with earthly eyes. The school of poets to which Dante belonged saw things in this light of heaven : love was no base passion : it was a pure, unselfish, yes, a self-sacrificing thing. It could be awakened by the sight of bright and chaste-eyed maidenhood : it carried no defilement : it evoked all that was best in man : it repressed all that was base.

In such a guise, love as a pure flame entered into Dante's life. In the order of things Beatrice was to be the agent for kindling a worshipfulness of love in Dante's heart : she was to bestow upon him the gift of a standard by which to measure himself. She was destined to be the messenger of heaven to him. Angels walk our world and minister to us, though at first we know them not as angels. God, who fulfils Himself in many ways, makes of the incidents of life a ministry of good. Does it strike us as strange that a simple, pure-hearted maiden of Florence was charged with a ministry to Dante ? Or that Beatrice should kindle in his life a flame of love, which was destined to be to him a light that shone all the brighter as the day of hope passed into a night of darkness and disappointment ?

We learn, as Dante did, through love: we learn by whatever mother-love can teach us, but the order of life brings upon us the influence of a love which comes robed in mystery and which kindles a strange fire within the heart. Then the soul discovers the power of a love more imperative than the love of mother: it may be the prelude of base possibilities hereafter, but it comes challenging at first only nobler impulses: the impulse to give, the desire to defend, the necessity to worship. The spirit of reverence which then arises not only pays reverence to this fresh light of morning, but demands a self-reverence which resents any stain upon honour or any foul thought which might sully the radiance of a soul called now to a high and unknown destiny. Oh! friends of elder growth, whose early dreams have receded, driven into the backgrounds or purlieus of memory by the hard necessities and prosaic details of the house-keeping and house-building life, and into whose hearts comes creeping the foolish jealousy of desire to bind your children's thoughts wholly to yourself, can you not with clear thought and larger outlook perceive, if you cannot recall, that all natural emotions are beautiful in their time, and are meant to carry on the education of the soul in the knowledge of its own capacities? At least have faith in God: suppress the fears

and check the murmurs of your hearts, and see that there is something noble in the dawning love which prompts to self-sacrifice and self-surrender, and which in the sweet maidenhood of its dawn is a pure and purifying passion, reverent and worshipful, and capable, if left unspoilt, of building up homes and of writing histories worthy to be read hereafter.

After such a fashion, the best of the Florentines felt. The spirit of Dante's age saw woman as one might behold a glorious vision: it was a spirit free from all touch of things material: those who shared it rejoiced in an ideal of womanhood. We need to realise this spirit of worshipful aloofness if we are to understand Dante and his age. To Dante, filled with such a spirit, there came the influence which has been for ever associated with his life.

But who was Beatrice? The question has been continuously asked. Was she only an ideal? Is the *Vita Nuova* merely an allegory based upon the *Shepherd of Hermas*? This has been roundly declared to be the case. It has been urged in support of the allegorical theory that Dante's insistence upon the number "9" in the *Vita Nuova* proves that it is intentionally allegorical. But what is the fact? The number nine does not always fit in with dates given, and Dante

is driven to the expedient of seeking for dates in order to bring them into harmony with this mystic number. He is compelled to resort, for instance, to an Arabian mode of computation. The *Vita Nuova* shows us an author anxious to find mystic significance in the tale he tells. Had he been writing an allegory he could have arranged the dates to possess in perfection the mystic "9," but as he is only dealing with facts he tries to make them fit with his mystic thought. The simpler explanation is to believe that he takes a basis of fact and in the *Vita Nuova* works over these facts by the aid of his later imagination. We must believe that Beatrice was a real person.

But who was she? Was she Beatrice Portinari? Possibly she was; indeed, I think we may say probably. But I am inclined to ask, Does it matter? Whoever she was, she was the inspiration of love to Dante. She was the woman who stood for the ideal of womanhood to him. She was the influence of that which was natural, to be followed by that which was spiritual. First that which was natural, afterwards that which was spiritual, is the Apostolic order; and in it is the explanation of the story. First the girl awoke in him the consciousness of something pure and lovable, then came the subtle change which invested her with qualities and attributes more than

human, till at length she became a symbol of all that was highest and best—the symbol of highest intelligence and highest love, the symbol of highest political ambition; the symbol now of Theology, now of Florence, but always the Shekinah of his days and nights. But whatever she became in Dante's spirit, she was at first the dear, sweet girl of Florence, the formal element of that which was destined to be so great and so wonderful in the days to come. Her death closes the first act in Dante's life. The narrative of her death we feel is no mere allegory. Dante is plunged into grief. The whole world is changed to him. Florence itself is a city which sits desolate, for Beatrice is no more. Dante's grief leads to what we may call the chaos of his life. It is a period in which grief leads to recklessness, and for a time restraints are flung aside in the vain endeavour to forget sorrow in excitement and change.

The second act in Dante's life opens with the restoration of his powers and the realisation of life's opportunities. He marries. Some critics believe that they see indications of an unhappy home. Here again the conjecture is groundless, and there are not wanting indications which have been taken to prove the contrary. In Vergilio's poem addressed to Dante, he speaks of a Phyllis

who might crown Dante with his poet's crown. It has been thought by some that this Phyllis is Dante's wife, Gemma. At any rate the pictures drawn of an inharmonious married life are purely conjectural.

Dante, once settled, took up the rôle of citizen life. He qualified by becoming a member of the Guild of Apothecaries, which included literature. He took an interest in public affairs. He became a member of the Council of the Captain of the City, and later one of the Council of an Hundred. Public or private affairs led him into money difficulties: he was compelled to contract a debt of a considerable amount. But he rose to be a man of civic influence.

His character as a legislator shows us a man cautious, zealous, resolute. For six months after becoming a member of the Council of the Captain he listens to the debates in silence: he seems never once to have opened his lips. He was watching and learning. When, however, he became a member of the Council of the Hundred he took an active part in city affairs: he advocated reform: he favoured the embellishment of the city. He shared in the debate concerning the removal of the hospital and the burial-ground to make room for the new cathedral; and in that concerning the beautifying of the Baptistery.

The golden age, however, of democratic Florence had passed away, and, when Dante became Prior of the city, cross currents of popular opinion and intrigue were at work. The old lines of cleavage were broken up : foreign influence was fatally felt. In office Dante showed himself resolute and inflexibly just. Hence came troubles. He took part in the banishment of disturbers of the peace, irrespective of party. He was vigorous and clear-sighted in opposing a grant of a levy of an hundred men to aid the policy of the Pope. He foresaw in it danger to the independence of Florence. For the same reason he dreaded French intervention in Italy, and he went on his fatal embassy to Rome to deprecate such a policy. During his absence intrigue led to revolt. His enemies and the enemies of Florence gained the upper hand. Swift and ruthless was the vengeance of his foes : sentence of exile was pronounced against him. The second act of his life's drama closes with the failure of all his hopes for the independence and glory of his native town.

The third act of his life opens with exile. Hopes of restoration for a time animated him and his friends. Vain efforts are made to organise a patriotic party. At length Dante learned how unstable are the spirits of men, and how few possess singleness of mind and largeness of soul. He

was compelled to separate himself from men who were incapable of sacrificing themselves or their prejudices on behalf of their country.

Then there began his pilgrimage after knowledge. He visited Bologna, he travelled through the Riviera on his way to Paris, and it has been said that we can find in the *Divina Commedia* a guide-book to his steps and the places through which he passed. At Paris he studied. There the influence of mystic teaching still lingered. It is true that Eckart, the most learned of the mystics, had left Paris five or six years before Dante arrived, but the current of his thought still flowed through men's minds. Among the students then crowding into Paris there arrived a young German, John Tauler by name: and he too fell under the influence of Eckart's teaching. It would be interesting to know whether Dante, then forty-three years of age, met John Tauler, then a youth, but destined to be at Strasburg a true and living power.

At length, however, there came to Dante a sudden revival of hope: the scholar became the politician again. A vision of world-order rose before his eyes. Henry VII. succeeded to the empire and initiated a vigorous policy. Dante hurried to Italy, his thoughts full of his vision of a free Church in a free State. He wrote earnest letters, giving fervent expression to his

hopes: he saw in imagination the overthrow of his enemies and the avenging of his exile. He was present, glowing with ardour and faith, at the great function at Milan when the Emperor was crowned; he passed with the crowds before the new Cæsar: he kissed the feet of the Emperor, in whom he believed his visions might be realised. But, alas! for human hopes! The Emperor's triumph was short-lived. He died during his Italian campaign. Dante had misread the times. The restoration of imperial unity was no longer possible. The spirit of nationalities was abroad. In France and in England this spirit was expressing itself with resolute force. The dream of Dante was destined to fade away.

The closing years of his life are those of an exile. Ravenna opened her doors to him: he lived there and he did her service: his skill and capacity pointed him out as a fit ambassador to Venice. At Venice he bore the humiliation of being treated with less respect than other ambassadors. He was refused a ship by which to return to Ravenna. He was obliged to make the journey along the coast, over which the marsh fever breathed its poison. He reached Ravenna with illness upon him, and within a few weeks he passed away.

Thus, as an exile, Dante died. The world dealt out to him hard and harsh measures. All

his dreams passed away. He loved, and Beatrice died. He cherished high hopes for his native city: Florence banished him. He strove to realise his dream of world unity in imperial greatness, but the one from whom he had hoped so much died prematurely. From one to whom fortune dealt out such hard and heavy measure we might expect a gloomy verdict on life; but he was too great to be cynical. With his temperament, so capable of joyousness, we might well have expected that sorrow, disappointment, and failure might have driven him to pessimism; but he gives no pessimistic verdict on life. His lost dreams have brought him a better vision: enlargement of thought, enlightenment of understanding, elevation of hope have come to him. It was not the first time nor the last in human history that grief led the way to greatness. Shall we arraign the Providence which scatters sorrow and from sorrow brings forth triumph? God writes no tragedies. He only shows the way in which trouble can lead to triumph. The significance of the cross is wider than we dream. Who will lament the death of the seed when he beholds the golden harvest? Who will call the sorrows and sufferings of Dante wasted, when they become transmuted into immortal song? Who will regret the tragedy of his life, when it brought to mankind the *Divine Comedy*?

LECTURE III

THE INEXORABLENESS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

("INFERNO")

It is a misfortune that the *Inferno* is the best known portion of Dante's poem. People are apt to judge both the poem and the poet from the one part of his work with which they are acquainted. This is to do a grievous injustice both to the *Divina Commedia* and to Dante himself. The poem is thought to be dark and lurid with the flickering flames of hell: the poet is pictured as a man harsh and hard, and gifted with an inventive gift ingeniously cruel.

But the idea of the *Inferno* is not Dante's invention. The conception of hell with elaborate torments is a commonplace of old-world religious thought. It is found in Christian treatises written before the *Divina Commedia*: it is found also in the chronicles or picturings of pre-Christian faiths.

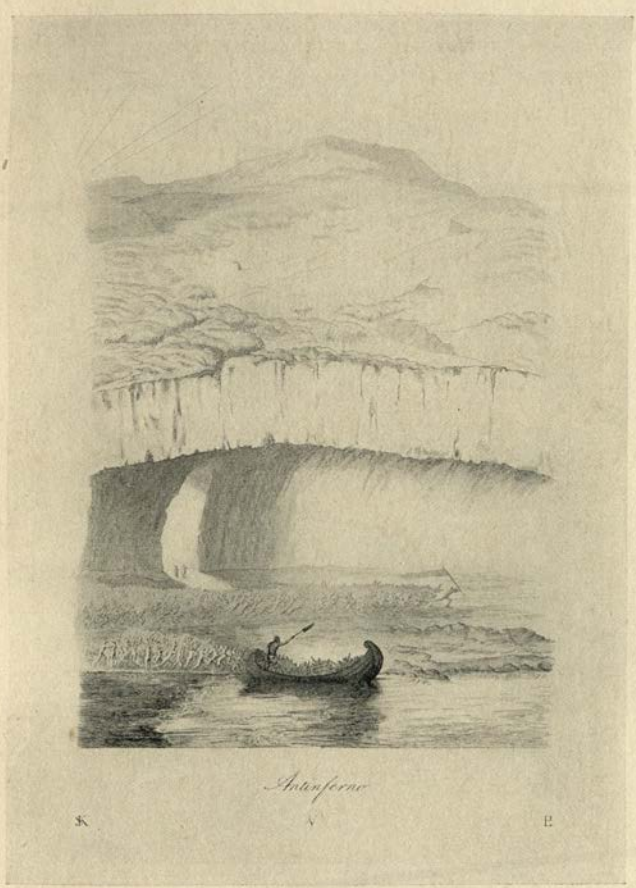
They are to be found in the East as well as in the West; they are not peculiar to Christian theo-

logy: they find a place also in Oriental thought. In the Jeypore Court at the Indo-Colonial Exhibition in London in 1886, paintings were exhibited (Nos. 1165, 1198, 1199, and 1200 in the catalogue) which illustrated the tortures of the damned in hell. Demons were represented sawing men asunder. Other victims were being tormented by birds, snakes, and wild animals; serpents were seen ready to destroy sinners as they fall into the pit (1176); there were pictures of heaven also, but they lacked the point and diversity which marked the scenes in hell. "The Jains," wrote Col. Hendley, who provided an excellent handbook for the Jeypore Court, "the Jains believe that there are many compartments in heaven and in hell. The former are usually represented as somewhat monotonous in character, while in the latter no complaint can be made of want of variety, for each inhabitant is being tormented by demons in a fashion appropriate to the sins he has committed in the world. Of course, cruelty to animals is most cruelly punished, but the lowest depth is reached by women who have told falsehoods to their husbands."[1] I need not multiply examples; the horrors represented as features of the Oriental hell are sufficiently well known.

[1] *Handbook to the Jeypore Court*, by Surgeon-Major (now Lt.-Col.) Hendley, pp. 19, 41, 45, Calcutta, 1886.

The notion of a hell is not therefore, as some imagine, peculiar to Christian teaching. It is rather an instinct of the race, and the objector who challenges what he supposes to be a Christian belief in hell must be prepared to go further and challenge the instinct which has given rise to this belief. If it is open to objection, the objection is against a conviction well-nigh universal. However far we may recoil from the notion, we are bound to weigh the fact that it follows a world-wide instinct; it is a tendency of human thought which meets us everywhere.

This being so, are we, in virtue of what we call our civilisation or our modern habits of thought, prepared to denounce it as a wholly worthless or degrading belief? Who can say that it is a base idea, or that there is nothing noble in the fact that men should thus collectively admit that there are doings and dealings seen among themselves which deserve—nay, seem to demand—hell? Who will say that it is not true that evil—strong and long persisted in, and spreading till evil habits prevail among men—does not produce a state of things which resembles hell? Who will say that there is not in every man a capacity for going into and experiencing in himself a veritable hell? Take this thought of hell: treat it as a phase of human thought: note that it



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marks the possession of a genuine moral sense, and realise how significant it is that everywhere men should have formed such an idea. It expresses a sense of justice, a conviction of retribution, and a striking power of self-condemnation possessed by the race. Is it not, in this aspect, the voice of the collective conscience of mankind? It is the language of those whose honest wrath has been roused by the sight of wide and wanton injustice done, and the confession of those who have felt the keen hell of self-reproach.

The idea thus being one common to human religious thought, Dante deals with it as an artist deals with the material at his disposal. He shows his genius in his workmanship. He wields the imagery of hell with a skilful and unhesitating hand. We may acknowledge that the scenes he delineates show an unequalled power and range of imagination. We may say that nowhere have horrors been so minutely pictured or massed in such terrifying profusion as in the *Inferno*; but it must never be forgotten that the general notion of such a hell belongs to the common stock of human thoughts. Dante is in this but the artist-poet who, in dealing with a common theme, has handled it with the audacity of genius, and has thrown over the whole an air of reality by

marshalling all its elements according to an intelligible moral order.

Here, of course, we touch the question of the ethical value of such conceptions. The ethical value will depend upon the standpoint of the author, and upon the spirit which pervades his conception. The ethical effect will depend upon the standpoint of the reader, and upon the spirit with which he studies. In other words, we need to understand the standpoint of the writer or artist if we are to enter into his spirit. We need also to take note of our own standpoint and our own spirit as students. Our standpoint may not be that of the Oriental artist or the mediæval poet; we must endeavour for the time to take their standpoint, but while doing so, we need not falsify our own judgment or forget that our own standpoint is not theirs. When we are able to identify ourselves in some sort with the writers, and yet to retain our own honesty of judgment, we shall find that, although there may be real differences of formal opinion between us and them, there will be large ranges of thought which will be common to us and to them. Certain great essential ideas will remain into which we can enter with keen interest and genuine moral sympathy.

But Dante's power is seen in more than his vivid delineation of scenes of torment: he writes

as one whose thoughts are coherent: he exhibits the torments of the doomed: but he graduates the scenes according to an intelligible system. He divides his *Inferno* into three main sections, and these sections exhibit penalties falling upon sins of different qualities: in the first section, sins of impulse are punished; in the second, sins of wilfulness; in the third, the sins are sins of falseness.

The *Inferno* consists of nine circles. As the pilgrim descends from higher to lower ground these circles narrow. In them are punished souls guilty of sins which increase in heinousness as we go downward. At the summit we meet those who are not so much sinners as those who lacked the help of Christianity: the three circles which follow are devoted to certain sins of impulse—voluptuousness, gluttony, greed, and wasteful extravagance. In the next circle anger, gloom, and discontent are punished in the Stygian Lake, which separates the earlier from the later circles: it is a transitional circle: its murky waters and the wall of the City of Dis, watched by the Furies, rise between the sinners of impulse and those beyond and beneath. Just inside the city walls are the heretics, and beneath there are those who have allowed violence to mark their sin, and have in wilful wrath turned against neighbour or self

or God or Art. Then we descend to a yet lower depth, where the classes of fraud are punished, and where seducers and flatterers, false prophets, peculators, hypocrites, the sacrilegious, evil counsellors, sowers of discord, and forgers have their portion. One lower depth remains, the ninth circle, where treachery is punished in the region of eternal cold.

Much has been written about Dante's classification of sins. An anxiety has been evinced to bring the list of sins in the *Inferno* into some kind of harmony with those in the *Purgatorio*. There is, of course, a general harmony of values (if we may use the expression) between them. Both lists indicate the poet's judgment on the relative heinousness or hatefulness of different sins. Those sins which may be described as sins of impulse are placed, both in the *Inferno* and in the *Purgatorio*, more advantageously than other faults, *i.e.* they are in the upper circles in each place: they are among the less heinous faults in the *Inferno*, and they are in the *Purgatorio* placed nearer to the earthly Paradise which crowns the summit of the mountain. The three faults dealt with are not faults of a vicious type: they consist of a giving way to passions which are common to men and which are based upon natural and innocent desires: sexual love, hunger and thirst, the wish

to acquire, and the readiness to spend, are not bad in themselves: they become bad when they pass the limits of moderation, *i.e.* when they disturb the due ethical proportion of life and pass beyond the sphere of legitimate activity. They are, compared with other sins, smaller and less vicious faults, or, lest we should appear to speak lightly of deeds which are often grievous and disastrously selfish, they are faults in their inception untouched by any malicious motive: they may overbear conscience and every wise restraint of reason: they are rudimentary passions: they fog the mind and they drug the will, but they do not of themselves drag the mind into malicious conspiracy with them. They are like the faults of children for whom the attractions of the hour are too strong. In short, they are impulsive, not deliberate. They can be set apart from the graver faults which follow. They may be called sins of earth, and appropriately only Nature's forces are employed in their punishment—the wind, the hail and rain, the rocks are the agents. That which adds the evil touch of blameworthiness or heinousness to sin is deliberation, design, in which a man begins to plan to do the wrong and flings his will into the transaction. Now, there is a path of transition from the sin of impulse to the sin of deliberation. Can we fix the nature of this path of transition?

Is it not prepared and provided by the spirit which broods and gathers together into an ill-treasurehouse the reasons for complaint and discontent? The fifth circle in the *Inferno* is, remember, pictorially and actually a way of transition: it is the Stygian Lake, which connects the fourth circle with the City of Dis, and in its waters the wrathful, the gloomy and discontented hearts pay their penalty, and Dante adds a very accurate psychological feature to such spirits, viz. the sluggish indolence which is so often the accompaniment because it is so often the cause of discontent:

> "Sad once were we,
> In the sweet air made gladsome by the sun,
> Carrying a foul and lazy mist within:
> Now in these murky settlings are we sad."
> (*Inf.* vii. 124–127.)

This is the transition circle, where sins of impulse may grow into sins of wilfulness.

The spirit of angry discontent is the soil out of which the violent revolt against the settled order of things is likely to spring. Men brood over misfortunes or failures, they ignore their own share in promoting them: they deem that hard measure has been dealt out against them: they have no luck: injustice rules: they have been left unfairly without a helping hand. If only

they had had such help—what great things they would have done!

"Jim Bowker, he said, 'If he'd had a fair show,
And the least bit of help in hoeing his row,
He'd have filled the world full of the sound of his name,
An' clim' the top round of the ladder of fame.'"

"It may have been so;
I dunno;
Then ag'in . . ."

This spirit of discontent, which broods till it sees in the changes and chances of this mortal life, not the educating hand of a beneficently stimulating providence, but the action of hard injustice and unappreciative favouritism, rises from its unwholesome brooding into an angry revolt against life. Thus the spirit of discontent lingers close by the walls of the flaming City of Dis—the city in which wrath burns fiercely and violence will before long break forth.

Wrath thus set loose may show itself in various ways, viz. in violence against others or in violence against itself—*i.e.* in murder or in suicide; or again, in defiance of God, as of those who, moved by disappointment, burst into angry revolt against Providence. One class of sinners, however, are placed just within the walls of Dis, and not immediately among these violent souls: the heretics,

doomed to their fiery shrouds, are here: they hold a place between the discontented and the actually violent. How are we to understand their being given such a place?

We are so apt to think of heresy merely as an intellectual error—the holding of some opinion which is not orthodox—that we are conscious of a difficulty in finding a reason for the placing of heresy here. But, if I mistake not, heresy, according to Dante, is more closely allied with its ancient than its modern meaning. Bishop Jeremy Taylor, with his wonted affluence of speech, argued that heresy, rightly interpreted, was more closely allied with error of life than error in opinion. Thomas Aquinas lays stress, as Dr Moore says, upon the notion of choice, or choosing what to believe, implied in the derivation of the word heresy (*Studies*, 2nd Series, p. 177). Some commentators on Dante have argued that heresy here ought to be understood of one special form of error, viz. a materialistic belief which was practically a denial of God. There may be some justification for such a view, but it hardly covers the ground; it fails to supply the psychological harmony which is required if we are to relate the circle of the discontented with the circles that follow. But have we not the key in our hand? The spirit of wrathful discontent may well develop

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into violence, but it does not leap from discontent into murder without some intervening phase. This intervening phase is the spirit which begins to disregard divine sanctions and safeguards in life. The thought of God is lost sight of: man will go his own way: from discontented anger he passes into a recklessness and wilfulness of mind. "The ungodly," said the Psalmist, "is so proud that he careth not for God" (Ps. x. 4). To use the popular metaphor, such an one takes the bit in his teeth: "Tush, there is no God in life, how should God perceive it? Is there knowledge in the most High? Or, if there be, why should we consider it or anything but what we wish? If God does not give what we desire, let us act and do the best for ourselves." The spirit of the materialist is in all this; but it must not be forgotten that the phase of mind is the important matter, not the particular form in which this phase may appear: it is the mental or moral attitude which is ready to fling off moral restraint and, instead of waiting upon God, to choose for itself. This may land a man in some doctrinal heresy, but it is wholly different from the moral state of the man who, in his search for truth, will not make his judgment blind, and who reaches an opinion which does not square with orthodoxy. Intellectual difficulties are not sins. Mistaken

and erroneous opinions are not sins. Heterodoxy is not heresy in the Dantesque or in the primitive sense. The heresy which Dante describes is the heresy of the soul which flings off moral considerations and claims the right of choosing and acting for self, regardless of the will and law of God. It is quite possible that heterodoxy may sometimes fall within this circle, but the essential feature of the circle does not deal with mental but with moral attitude, and, thus understood, it holds a fit and intelligible place in the poem.

Thus we pass from sins of impulse into the region of a discontent which broods over its hardships till it flings off restraint and is ripe for violence.

In the advance from lighter to darker forms of sin there are periods of transition, and Dante indicates these by the interposing of some special symbol of separation between certain classes of sin. The waters of Styx separate the sins of impulse from those of more deliberate wrong: and Geryon must be summoned and the great precipice must be descended when we would pass from the circles of violence to those depths in which fraud meets its penalty. Between other circles Virgil can advance on foot; but in making the transition from the circles of impulse to those of violence, from those of violence to those of

fraud, and again from those of fraud to those of treachery, the pilgrims depend upon the help of others. They are carried by boat across the Styx, upon the back of Geryon down to the Malebolge, or in the hand of a giant to the Cocytus. Thus the transition from one class of sin to another is marked.

Sins of fraud are, in Dante's view, worse than those of violence: there may be deliberate malice in violence, but there is deceit and craft in fraud. In the crime of violence mind and will may unite, but these powers, though used for unlawful objects, are not used in an unlawful way: craft and cunning are not resorted to. No deceit is employed to beguile or mislead the victim, *i.e.* the crime of violence is taken to be a straightforward crime; but when we descend into the Malebolge we reach the realm of those who are deceivers of their neighbours: "Deceit and guile go not out of her streets" (Ps. lv. 11). "The words of his mouth are unrighteous and full of deceit: . . . he imagineth mischief upon his bed, and hath set himself in no good way: neither doth he abhor anything that is evil" (Ps. xxxvi. 3, 4). In the downward stages of evil, there is a vast difference between the wilful determination which is under the power of a strong emotion and the cold, calculating deliberation which lays

aside the heat of its anger in order the more craftily to plan its actions.

In harmony with this deliberateness there is a calculated ingenuity in the tortures reserved for those who in their lives plotted with deliberate craft against their neighbours. These sinners are not left, like those who sinned through impulse, to the buffets of natural elements : the voluptuous are beaten by the wind : the gluttonous by the rain and hail : the avaricious and extravagant roll their burdens against one another. But in this region of fraud we meet with elaborately ingenious tortures in which demons take their share : the relentless lash here resounds, the fire plays on upturned soles, heads are reversed, the boiling pitch covers some, leaden hoods weigh heavy upon others. Some are transformed to serpents and retransformed again, others are enclosed in wandering flames, and others go cruelly mutilated or smitten by disfiguring plagues. Craft and fraud meet here with ingeniously contrived torments in payment of the falsehoods which they have so artfully plotted.

Leaving the ten gulfs of torment, where fraud meets its due, the pilgrims, by the aid of a giant, are lowered into the last dismal pit of hell. This nethermost circle is buried in the heart of the earth : it is the region of pitiless cold : every

spark of warm love is banished from this spot where treachery is punished. When the false heart has sold itself to the deceit which works evil against those to whom it is bound by ties of blood or gratitude, love flies from it. In such a chill heart pity cannot dwell; and, alas! the penalty of evil is to place itself under influences which tend to perpetuate the evil. The false, cold heart dwells where the icy blast does but intensify its coldness: the breath which beats upon it freezes all it touches. This, the possession of a heart out of which love has perished, is the last doom of sin! The Psalmist (Ps. xxxvi.), who delineated the downward progress of sin, expressed the final stage as the incapacity to hate evil: man at the worst is the man of whom it can be said, "Neither doth he abhor that which is evil."

Thus Dante carries us through the descending stages of sin: he does so with an inflexible conviction of right: he exhibits without hesitation the inexorableness of the moral order under which we live. He does so unswervingly, even when his heart throbs with pity for those whose lot he describes. A terrible conflict rages within him while imperative rectitude lays down the law and sympathy pleads for some mitigation of penalty. The best illustration of this inner conflict is found in the well-known story of the fifth canto. As

the sad procession of wind-driven spirits passes by, the eye of the poet is caught by the sight of two who cling together like doves moving lightly upon the wing. They are Paolo and Francesca. Modern criticism has disclosed facts which tarnish the romance of the story of these two lovers. It becomes a question for the student whether he is to read the tale as strict criticism demands, or whether he is to take it in its earlier form, which is full of the tenderest touches of a vivid love story.

The accuracy or inaccuracy of the legend is of purely secondary importance. Is it not clear that it presented itself to Dante as a pathetic narrative of unhappy but genuine love? If we are seeking historical facts, and these alone, we must of course accept the light which the best research can throw upon them; but if we are desirous of following the poet's thoughts and of entering into the realm of his imagining, we must accept the legend as he desired to set it before us. It seems to me we must deal with story and legend as we do with the poet's geography and astronomy; to follow Dante's pilgrimage we must lay aside much of our knowledge of earth and sky: we must imagine them to be what the poet believed them to be. In the same way, we must take the stories as Dante took them: we must not ask

what were the actual facts, but what were the facts as they appeared to Dante's mind and impressed his imagination. To Dante this story of Francesca was a beautiful story of defrauded love. If we are to understand its place and its significance in the poem, it must be the same to us. The facts which weaken or tarnish the romance have their historical interest. The poetical interest, however, does not lie in these, but in the thoughts and emotions which the story as accepted in his day awakened in Dante's soul. Our interest is not historical but psychological.

Now, the story which appealed to Dante was in this wise: Francesca was the daughter of Guido da Polenta, Lord of Ravenna. A long and disastrous war had been waged between this Lord of Ravenna and the Lords of Rimini—Malatesta by name. At length peace was arranged, and, in order to strengthen the peaceful bonds between the two families, a marriage was proposed between the son and possible heir of Rimini and Francesca, the daughter of the Lord of Ravenna. But the son of the Lord of Rimini was rude in appearance and a cripple to boot: he was Gianciotto—crippled John—by name. A man whose personal appearance and manner were not likely to win a lady's love. A counsellor, more crafty than prudent, advised Francesca's father to practise a deceit upon

his daughter, and to allow a brother of the proposed bridegroom to act as his representative at the espousals. Accordingly, Gianciotto's younger brother Paolo, comely and courteous, was sent to Ravenna. Francesca saw the young man as he crossed the courtyard: she was told that this was her destined bridegroom. Everything in the youth—appearance, manner, breeding—appealed to the heart and fancy of the girl. The ceremony of marriage took place: the bride was conveyed to Rimini, in the full belief that she was wedded to Paolo; but not till the morning, when she saw the uncanny figure of Gianciotto rise from her side, was she aware of the trick—the wicked fraud upon her innocence and affection. Her love for Paolo and his love for her had grown—his through strong attraction, hers in a sweet and natural trustfulness. Their love had become a fact and a force: and love in her case had been violated by a cowardly deceit. Time went on: the marriage which had thwarted their love had created a tie which favoured intimacy: the intimacy grew fatal. Gianciotto's suspicions were aroused, and he returned unexpectedly. Paolo and Francesca were together. Paolo caught sight of his brother and made an effort to escape without being seen; but an accident delayed his exit, the hem of his mantle caught as he left the room by another door:

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Gianciotto saw him and rushed upon him with dagger drawn: Francesca flung herself between the brothers, and Gianciotto's weapon pierced her bosom—once more Gianciotto struck, and this time Paolo fell. Gianciotto left them where they fell, and the next morning the lovers were laid together in one grave.

It is quite true that the soft light which gives glamour to this sad tale is dispelled when we are told that at the time of the tragedy the lady had a daughter nine years of age, and that her lover was already a married man of forty years of age and the father of two children. But if history insists upon our accepting these hard facts, which transform a pathetic romance into a vulgar intrigue, it is to be remembered that this is not Dante's story. His tale is not one of treacherous and illicit love; his story is of young hearts, first deliberately thrown together by worldly policy, then drawn together by a natural affection, and finally placed in a position of cruel contiguity at a time when wounded pride and innocent affection filled the woman's heart and ardent love beat high in the young man's bosom. Dante's story is of a love which grew out of circumstances which carry much pathos and some apology with them. It is wholly unlike the tale of domestic dishonour which recent criticism has made public. It is only

due to the pathos and tenderness with which Dante has invested the story that we should divest our minds of the ugly features recently added, and read the tale as the poet meant it should be read; for only so can we derive from it the moral significance which he felt it to possess.

And what is this significance? Here we need to go back and for a moment to follow the trend of the poet's mind.

No reader of Dante can fail to recognise the supreme position which he gives to love; love lies at the root of all things; it is the great motive force in heaven and earth; it is the power which calls all the best faculties and noblest emotions of man into play; it comes with a thrilling, captivating power; it is no mere light fancy; it is no gross passion: it is a glorious force enslaving while it elevates the whole being; it has in it an abiding power; when once it comes it comes to stay; time cannot destroy it; force and fraud cannot annihilate it. What, then, can be thought of the fraud practised on Francesca, of the treacherous policy which having aroused love sets itself to thwart it? That, in Dante's view, is an act of treason against God; the deepest hell awaits those who plot such a crime against love.

If love led Francesca and Paolo to death, in the

frozen depths Cain, the type of fratricidal crime, waits him who slew them :

> "Amor condusse noi ad una morte :
> Caino attende chi vita ci spense."
> (C. v. 106, 107.)

There is no doubt as to Dante's reading of the story ; it was a genuine and inexperienced love which was at the root of the tale.

But, and here lay the sublimest tragedy of the whole, these two lovers, who, if all had been simple and fair, might have lived a happy and holy life together, and been crowned hereafter with the paradise joys which await the good, have been placed in circumstances cruelly tantalising ; the barrier of a loveless and wicked bond has been placed between them ; in one sad moment impassioned nature, long restrained, broke down the barrier, and that one wild moment carried its eternal consequences. Dante, who can feel with exquisite sensibility for the lovers, realises the tremendous inexorableness of the law of righteousness ; he knows well that righteousness is as the salt of love to preserve it from corruption ; he knows the principle which long afterwards was proclaimed in now well-known words :

> "I could not love thee, dear, so much,
> Loved I not Honour more."

And Dante, with the strong conviction that none can play fast and loose with the inevitable laws of right, sees, and is bound to see, those two poor souls, more sinned against than sinning, reaping in the dark underworld the eternal consequence of that brief hour of wrong. Oh, the pity of it! the pity of it! One's heart alternately burns with hot indignation against the treachery and bleeds with unappeasable pity for the dear souls which, even in the sad region of the lost, cling to one another in the pitiful embrace of a joint sorrow and an unquenched love. The whole picture, exquisite in its tender and delicate delineations of emotion, sets forth, while affirming the changeless law of right, the dignity and high quality of a love which, even when charged with frailty, is capable of enduring throughout eternity, and which unstained might have lifted these unhappy souls into the bosom of God.

The poet in giving us this, perhaps the best known passage in his poem, has impressed upon it an enduring quality, because in it his great faith in love, his stern demand for its untarnished honour, and his inexpressible human sympathy all mingle in a scene which appeals to every pure and tender heart. No wonder that artists have tried—alas! how vainly—to translate this picture into form and colour. Doré, as might be expected, vulgarised

it. Even Hoffman, whose gifts are of a higher range, gives us but a coarse parody of it. Ary Scheffer was nearer to a true conception; but it was reserved for an Englishman, Watts, to express most truthfully the unutterable sadness of the incident when he showed us the meeting of changeless regret with changeless love in the wearied frames and drooping eyelids of the lovers whom Dante has made immortal. A strong loyalty to invincible right explains Dante's apparently unflinching sternness of character. So marked did this trait appear to Mr John Addington Symonds that he found it hard to understand Dante's tremendous denunciations of certain evil-doers: he shuddered as he thought of the inexorable and pitiless condemnations dealt out by the poet. How could a man who could linger listening entranced to Casella's song, delighting alike in the melody of sound and in the tender words so tenderly uttered—"Love that discourses in my thoughts," —turn away with deaf and contemptuous ear from the prayer of the wretched soul imprisoned in the thick ice, who besought him to wipe away the bitter icicles which burned and blinded his eyes? (*Inf.* xxxiii. 148–150.) One who could so turn aside from such a simple act of mercy might well be deemed lacking in sensitiveness or sympathy.

It is no answer to this to plead that the scene

is a fiction of the poet's imagination, and must not therefore be quoted as representative of Dante's character; for it seems to me the very charm of the poem lies in the almost unconscious way in which the poet discloses his own character. I do not mean that if Dante had really encountered Alberigo in the ice region he would have refused to clear his eyes of the blinding ice, but I mean that what Dante described as his refusal was indicative of the treatment which Dante believed was due to such treachery as Alberigo had practised.

Alberigo had a quarrel with his brother and his nephew: he pretended to be reconciled: he invited them to a banquet, and at the banquet he said, "Bring in the fruit": the words were the signal to assassins, who came in and murdered the two guests. It is the hypocrisy and treachery of the act which rouses Dante to a sternness almost vindictive. It is no expression of personal spite, it does not spring from cruelty or littleness of soul, it is the white heat of righteous indignation. The measure of Dante's sternness must be found in his intense sense of righteousness. Beyond almost all else but love, his conviction of the eternal rule of truth and righteousness possesses his soul. All his prepossessions, his theological theories, his political preferences, his

tastes, and his personal sympathies must give way before the demands of the eternal right. He was a true Catholic: he had reverence for the Holy See: he took a deep interest in doctrinal discussions and conformed his views with those of recognised doctors of the Church; but greater than all ecclesiastical or theological matters was the ethical order of the universe: he could submit theories to orthodox opinions and customs to Church rule, but he could not put his conscience in pawn or believe that official authority could set aside the everlasting laws of righteousness.

To those to whom right holds such a supreme place, a certain sternness must come. "Fiat justitia ruat coelum" has often been proclaimed when it is not justice, but intolerance, which has inspired the utterance. But with Dante it is a noble and inexorable faith in righteousness which fills his soul and lifts him at times into a judgment-seat nobler and loftier than that of Popes and Kings; for even these he arraigns before the throne of eternal righteousness. To him the ultimate failure of righteousness is incredible, and unbelief in its sovereignty is the supreme heresy.

The *Inferno* thus manifests law, strong and inexorable. Dante maintains in his picturing of it the inviolability of the moral order; but we

shall not reach the full significance of its teaching if we fail to note that the *Inferno* bears witness also to the law of love as the supreme law of the universe. Dante leads us into the realms of hell: he takes us through the dim vestibule of anguish, through its murky flow, its oozy and darksome floods, past its flaring towers and furnace-like graves, across the causeway which flanks its rivers of blood and its fields of fiery rain, through its blazing torrents and its frozen horrors; but before we enter he tells us that love had a part in its making. We may tread in these sad regions where the beams of day are "silent all," yet, even in this darkness, a flicker of light such as we sometimes see in fitful movement on a starless night meets us in our journey. This is a realm in which hope can hardly live, but it is one, so Dante shows us, into which love—great, powerful, patient love—can enter, and, though bruised and wounded, can live on with inextinguishable flame.

Dante is the poet of love, and in the deeps of hell he will find it for us. He mentions love many times in his great poem. It is the one great keyword of his thought: creation is love manifested: "Into new loves the eternal love unfolded" (*Par.* xxix. 18). With it alone can we unlock the closed doors of its best and highest imagery. Love, which is the atmosphere of

heaven and the explanation of Purgatory, claims a right of entry into the kingdom of the lost. Love is mentioned nineteen times in the *Inferno*. There are some occasions in which love is mentioned which we may dismiss at once as having no special bearing on our subject. Once it is mentioned as a worthy quality in rulers (C. i. 104): once as the strong incentive to study (C. i. 83): and there are two occasions on which the reference is to the power of fraud to break down the bonds of ordinary human love (C. xi. 56–62). Of the remaining fifteen allusions, four may be said to deal with divine love, and eleven with love between man and woman.

When we deal with these eleven references to this weak and sweet human love, we can reduce them at once to nine by eliminating the reference in canto xxx. 39 to the perverted love of the wretched Mirra, and the reference to the ardent spirit of adventure which drove Ulysses forth upon further travels, carried away by a love of enterprise which was stronger than the duteous love he owed Penelope. When we have put aside these references to love perverted and vanquishing, all the other nine lie within the compass of the famous fifth canto. What is the significance of this canto? It tells the story of those unhappy mortals who have been undone

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by this strong and wonderful passion of love. The greatest have gone down before it—Achilles, the warrior champion of the Greeks, the hero of the siege of Troy, having fought manfully in all else, is carried away by it:

"Il grande Achille,
Che con amore al fine combatteo."
(*Inf.* v. 65, 66.)

The fifth canto is the canto of love. In it we see, driven by the inexorable blast, the great cloud of souls who lost their lives for love (C. v. 69). Semiramis, Dido, Cleopatra, Helen, Tristan, with others, dames and cavaliers of old, go flitting by. With these go the sad pair on whose tragedy we have touched.

In their story, as told by Dante, love enters in an unexpected fashion into the loveless realm of the lost, for let us mark that the characteristic of the *Inferno* is its lovelessness; it is a region without light and without song, because it is a region without love. In only one other place besides this Francesca incident does Dante give admission to love in hell. That passage for the moment I reserve, while I wish to lay stress upon the great and significant fact that, according to Dante, hell is the region from which love is being slowly banished.

Once we have left the fifth canto behind, all the sins which confront us are sins against love—and in their consummation they drive love out of heart and life. Go down to the lowest pit of all—stand upon the great ice plain and shrink before the ice-cold blast; the keen wind which freezes heart and eyes is generated by the movement of Lucifer's wings. Everything which this chill wind meets is frozen into death. We meet the inversion of all that we find in the *Paradiso*. There, as here, there is a spot which is motionless, but here it is the motionlessness of death: in Paradise it is the stillness of eternal peace. There, as here, there is a power which generates movement, but here the movement kills with its icy touch the first sign of that which is life indeed. There the movement is the movement of love spreading everywhere its sweet and far-reaching activity, and quickening into fuller life and affection every creature according to its capacity to receive and to respond.

Thus, written in the eternal world of the *Inferno* as conceived by Dante, we may read the changeless principle concerning evil—"the end of these things is death." Inasmuch as life is love and God is love, the final death and the only irrecoverable death, is seen there where love is slain to its very roots and its power of revival is

destroyed. And as the great ice circle preaches that the final form of sin is the death of love which is the life of the soul, so do all the earlier circles show that the sorrows, miseries, disappointments, and despairs of existence can be traced to those sins which either pervert or mutilate, stifle, wound, or destroy those capacities of love which, if nourished, tended, and quickened by exercise into kindly activity, can ripen into a living power pervading man's life and uplifting his character, till it grows beautiful with the beauty which is divine.

The lack of love, then, is the disease of the soul, from which all life's worst evils flow. Let this thought keep its place in our minds, for otherwise we shall misconceive Dante's teaching. Indeed, we may well hesitate to look into the torture chambers of the *Inferno* if we have not grasped this central and saving thought. In one passage, Dante has pointed out with firm finger in vivid metaphorical way the perils of beholding evil with unclarified vision. Only heavenly eyes can look into the face of evil unharmed. Sanctified spirits may take up the serpent and drink the deadly thing unharmed, and those with whom the Son of God goes as companion may pass through the fire unscathed; but for ordinary mortals the very sight of evil is bad, and may end in a

paralysed conscience. Is it not thus that we must read the parable which is acted before our eyes in the ninth canto of the *Inferno*, when the Furies cried, "Medusa, come, so we to stone will turn him"? At the words, Virgil turned Dante round, and bade him close his eyes, for the Gorgon's head once seen would make the return from hell impossible.

We often play with evil, and thoughtlessly treat some aspects of it as a joke; but as it is dangerous to play with fire, so is there a moral danger in familiarity with wrong. Even the prudish customs which Mrs Grundy maintains may have their value; we need to realise that one fatal result of seeing evil may be to lose moral sense of its evil. "Sin," writes a modern novelist,[1] "sin effects an organic change in man, so that even its expiation is conditioned by the blindness it has wrought." To thrust oneself rashly into the presence of evil may end in the petrifying of the high sensibilities and delicate tastes which shelter the love of right. It is not well for souls untrained in spiritual activity to dwell among evil things; it needs much baptism of good to be able to meet even the sight of evil unharmed. I doubt whether the reading of the *Inferno* to those who do not hold the true key to its significance is likely to do

[1] *Sir Guy and Lady Rannard*, by H. N. Dickinson, p. 215.

much good. The sight of the horrible consequences of evil can for such lead at the best to fear. Fear of this kind is not good. Therefore, before I ask you to mark some of its characteristic features as unfoldings of sin, let me recall Dante's own great principle of life and good—even the love which can cast out fear; for love, says Dante,

> "Love must be
> The seed within yourselves of every virtue
> And every act that merits punishment."
> (*Purg.* xvii. 103, 105.)

This must be kept in mind; love is Creation's final law, and those who sin against the pure beauty and high demands of love create their own punishment; they are become aliens in the divine kingdom, and their doom springs up naturally from the sowing of some seed of selfishness disregarding the higher claims of love. When we realise this principle, the scenes in the *Inferno* become illustrations of an intelligible law; the horrific thoughts of arbitrary power, or of a force which delights in torment, or of a mere dogmatic hell, pass away. The terror is no longer the palsying terror of a slavish and unreasoning dread; it is now what the Apostle would call "the terror of the Lord," the working out of that law which, in its ultimate analysis, will be

found to be a law of love—"Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." We need to learn—what the fashion of this generation is so reluctant to face—that we live in a world in which this law prevails, that it is the vainest thing to seek to evade it, and that it is next to criminal folly to bring up children in the belief that this law is not true. The seat of law is "the bosom of God and her voice the harmony of the universe"; and, if so, stern fidelity to law is in the long run the highest love. Therefore it is that God does not let us off; for only in the strict maintenance of right can men be led to the conviction that evil is evil, and only in the faith that love is life can men pursue the pilgrimage whose goal is the presence of God. The *Inferno* is the revelation of evil as it really is: it is also the revelation that at root evil is defection from love. With these principles before us, we may study the circles of the *Inferno*.

We first mark those unhappy souls whose lot is in the vestibule of hell—the indifferent or cowardly selfish. If love is the spiritual law to which we owe obedience, then we are created to make love the law of our lives, and the first great treachery against love is committed when self-love takes the place of higher love. Love in its true essence

is active, and must go forth to some person or cause or object other than self; when it turns away from all else and centres in self we call it self-love, but even this word does not fully express its reprehensible quality: it is self-interest, self-seeking: it is a cowardly self-protection which knows no enthusiasm for any cause, no courageous activity for good or evil. Those who are its victims are despised of all; they belong to the wastage of the world; good for nothing, yet so mean of soul they are, that even if they could be of use, men would scorn their service and heaven would have none of them. In the vestibule of hell we meet these profitless souls—ignoble, bereft of all manliness, beings who never entered into their inheritance of life, who at best existed, but never lived; they are left to the mercy of the insect world to which they properly belonged; their sin is the turning away of love from its proper and noble function of service. They show that though love is the law of life, it is only a true law of life when the love is courageous and true. Dante cautions us against the error contained in the saying that all love is good:

> . . . "How hidden
> The truth is from those people, who aver
> All love is in itself a laudable thing;

Because its matter may perchance appear
Aye to be good; but yet not each impression
Is good, albeit good may be the wax."
(*Purg.* xviii. 34–39.)

Love is good material, but it may be stamped with an ill image, as wax may be made to receive an evil impression. Here is the secret of the matter, and the exposition reminds us of the ill use men may make of the good God gives. But the sin of these self-seeking people is that they make no real use of love: the wax is marked with the seal of self: "per se foro," therefore, with the opportunities of life before them, they "have never lived." So their fate is to dwell within the gate of hell, sundered from all besides, for, as heaven could not receive them, hell does not welcome them.

"These miscreants, who never were alive,
Were naked, and were stung exceedingly
By gadflies and by hornets that were there.
These did their faces irrigate with blood,
Which, with their tears commingled, at their feet
By the disgusting worms were gathered up."
(C. iii. 64–69.)

Poor souls, who lived for coward self, shirking not only high duties with their noble risks, but also the petty annoyances and pin-pricks which assail men who follow their convictions! They

are now given over to the contempt of both and to the ignominious harassing of ignoble creatures.

In the first circle dwell the great souls of Pagan times, and this circle offers no material for our present inquiry. We pass to the second circle.

If love can thus be self-centred, love may also be degraded. Pure, true love is lofty and unselfish in its aims: it holds itself in a noble restraint which seeks first and beyond all else the good of those it loves. In the discipline of this world it has scope to work through the various channels along which the energy of life can work. It can express itself through the body, which is the physical realm given to us to be ruled. Love can express itself in passion, but passion is not love. It is given to Æolus to let loose the winds upon the earth, but it is given him also to control them and confine them within his cave. When he ceases to rule them, he ceases to be a god. Those who sow the wind of gusty passion reap the whirlwind. The little breath of air that was wafted over the bed of flowers and bore their fragrance onward in its bosom is the same power which can rise to stormy strength and work havoc in the homes of men. The power once let loose soon claims its liberty, defies our control and becomes our master. The passing pleasure too long and too much indulged in becomes a

tyrannous habit; that which was once a joy grows into a dominating necessity, and men are no longer masters of themselves but victims driven along by the passions which have enslaved them.

So Dante pictures the sinners who have sinned through indulgence of the flesh:

"I came into a place mute of all light,
Which bellows as the sea does in a tempest,
If by opposing winds 't is combated.
The infernal hurricane that never rests
Hurtles the spirits onward in its rapine;
Whirling them round, and smiting, it molests them.
When they arrive before the precipice,
There are the shrieks, the plaints, and the laments,
There they blaspheme the puissance divine.
I understood that unto such a torment
The carnal malefactors were condemned,
Who reason subjugate to appetite.
And as the wings of starlings bear them on
In the cold season in large band and full,
So doth that blast the spirits maledict,
It hither, thither, downward, upward, drives them;
No hope doth comfort them for evermore,
Not of repose, but even of lesser pain.
And as the cranes go chanting forth their lays,
Making in air a long line of themselves,
So saw I coming, uttering lamentations,
Shadows borne onward by the aforesaid stress."

(*Inf.* v. 28–49.)

The picture is doubly vivid: its fidelity to Nature strikes us: the flight of starlings as they dart here and there, dive down and then soar upward, and the doleful chant of the long line of cranes are accurate in fact; but even more true to the law of consequence is the picture from the point of view of moral law. The swift change of direction in the flock of starlings is due to the free movement of their wings; the fatiguing changes, up and down and here and there, which mark the progress of the doomed souls are due to the fierce and fickle wind which drives them on. They are the victims of the relentless forces which they themselves have unloosed. They go wailing, wailing their sad chant of sorrow through the eternal years.

Thus love which has been debased sets men at the mercy of passions which, if ruled, had been a strength to them, but are now a cruel and relentless tyranny, dooming them to restlessness instead of that heart-rest to which pure love has ever led the sons of men. The whole picture is dark: the tempest bellows through a region robbed of light: it is the realm in which the light of pure love has been extinguished. These souls go singly, driven in solitary suffering, save for the sad pair, Francesca and Paolo. In their permitted companionship in these doleful shades

the sentence of everlasting solitude seems to be remitted; in them there burns a spark of unselfish love; they were the victims of a momentary passion which brought them to these dark stormy coasts, but theirs was not the vice of a gross desire grown to debasing habit. Upon them falls the smiting wind and the everlasting darkness, yet, like a fitful gleam upon the face of night, their love gives a smouldering light in the encompassing gloom. It is a tribute infinitely pathetic. Dante, stern to maintain the laws of eternal right, sees them plunged into this realm of restlessness and lamentation, but he has not the heart to separate these two; wrong as their passion was, the love which drew them together was not wholly base. He leaves this inconsistent spark of light in the underworld; he will not sunder them; they go before the tyrannous storm for ever, but they go together. Do we wonder that as he listened to the sad tale told by Francesca's lips, and heard the despairing groans of Paolo at her side, Dante felt his heart give way and, overcome by the deep pity of it all, swooned,

> "And fell, even as a dead body falls."
> ("E caddi, come corpo morto cade.")
> (C. v. 142.)

Love—human love,—like a tiny green leaf on a

burnt-up soil, is seen undestroyed in the kingdom where vice has destroyed so much of life.

But in another passage in the *Inferno* love makes itself felt with strong and resistless force. No reader of the *Inferno* can have forgotten the place in which the poet tells how at one time hell trembled and the universe was thrilled with love; then down fell the giant rocks as the mountainous sides of the infernal prison-house gave way. The devastation wrought at the time extended further down and broke down the bridges which spanned the gulfs of the eighth circle, where the fraudulent were punished.

What is the meaning of this convulsion and ruin in hell? Dante explicitly tells us that the catastrophe was caused by the earthquake which occurred when our Lord was crucified; he is careful to give the date, calculated according to his theories to the very hour:

"Yesterday, five hours later than this hour,
One thousand and two hundred sixty-six
Years were complete that here the way was broken."
(*Inf.* xxi. 112–114.)

It was twelve hundred and sixty-six years before Dante's pilgrimage that hell shook and its walls and bridges gave way; as our Lord, according to Dante's view, died at the age of thirty-four

(*Convito*, iv. 23), the year of Dante's pilgrimage was A.D. 1300 ; the earthquake took place, Dante tells us, shortly before Christ's descent into hell :

> "A little
> Before His coming who the mighty spoil
> Bore off from Dis, in the supernal circle,
> Upon all sides the deep and loathsome valley
> Trembled so, that I thought the Universe
> Was thrilled with love."
>
> (*Inf.* xii. 37–42.)

So Virgil speaks, after explaining that on his previous visit (*i.e.* the legendary one described in the ninth canto) the precipice had not fallen down; it was shaken down afterwards when Christ uttered His dying cry. We need to follow Dante's thought with care if we are to grasp the significance of the symbolism here. Two things are clear : it was at an actual historical moment that this ruin in hell was wrought, and the impression which the trembling made upon one, who himself was a denizen of the highest circle in the *Inferno*, was that the universe at that moment thrilled with love. According to all Christian thought, the supremest manifestation of the love by which the whole creation moves was shown at the moment when Christ died : the loneliness of His suffering and death marked the climax of the divinest love. It is ruin in a sense to hell ; it is love to the universe.

It is a love, mightier than the poor, piteous love of Francesca and Paolo, which makes itself felt in hell. Hell itself cannot escape the might and influence of that love. Some even of the dwellers in hell were rescued by the victorious Christ, for thus Virgil describes what he saw at that hour of marvel :

> "I was a novice in this state,
> When I saw hither come a Mighty One,
> With sign of victory incoronate."
>
> (*Inf.* iv. 52–54.)

This Mighty One drew forth from hell Adam and Abel, Noah, Moses, Abraham and David, Israel and his children and Rachel—"and others many." The souls so rescued were those who lived before Christ. Virgil is careful to explain further :

> "And thou must know, that earlier than these
> Never were any human spirits saved."
>
> (*Inf.* iv. 62, 63.)

Hence the picture set before us is this : love is seen rescuing some from hell : love shatters hell's walls and leaves the mark of ruin there as an eternal token of love's power to make hell tremble and to shake down its ramparts.

We cannot read our modern views into Dante

Cadute del Montone presso S. Benedetto

and argue from what he writes some hints of the ultimate victory of love over all,

> "When good shall fall
> At last—far off—at last, to all,
> And every winter change to spring."

But if we cannot do this, we may at least point out the strong faith which Dante has in the power of love. Amid all the dark scenes of unswerving law and unfaltering justice which he sets before us, his confidence in love is unshaken. Even as he sets himself to build up the great habitation of lost souls, he bids us believe that not only almighty power and highest wisdom, but primeval love joined in the creation of this dark abode. Do we see hints of a struggle in Dante's mind between his loyalty to mediæval orthodox thought and the freer currents of his own disposition of thought? We might be tempted to suggest this, were it not that Dante's own courage and independence of thought were quite strong enough to refuse to write down as true anything that conflicted with his own moral sense. Of this courage there is sufficient evidence elsewhere in his poem, and we must, I think, take it here that he acquiesced in the current view which regarded hell as an everlasting prison-house, but he did so with a deep and unappeasable sorrowfulness. His

soul shrinks from the vision which he is called to see. He records the terrible words written on the doleful gate :

"All hope abandon ye who enter here,"

but he tells us that as he read them his exclamation was, "Their sense is hard to see." We must, however, regard him as accepting the received opinion of his day on this matter, the hopelessness of those upon whom these prison walls close.

And yet he starts speculations which lead in unexpected directions. These marks of ruin in hell give rise to strange thoughts ; when the precipice fell the universe was thrilled with love, but this love is capable of causing further overthrow ; it is a love which, according to some, may throw the whole world once more into confusion —it is a love

"By which there are who think
The world ofttimes converted into chaos."

This phrase, we are told, carries us back to a doctrine set forth by Empedocles, that all things were combined by love. Then a happy life belonged to all ; but hate or discord came and disorganised all ; and as love or hate prevailed the world periodically was made and unmade by these opposing forces. In this theory love is the harmonising power binding all into one happy

sphere, and hate is the disorganising power. Dante in alluding to this theory gives it a fresh turn: he speaks of love as a power which might bring chaos. This is in harmony, of course, with the picture he has given us of love bringing ruin into the *Inferno*. In his further statement he hints that this love, which has shown its power by causing the falling down of some of hell's bulwarks, may, in the view of some, further show its power by reducing all to chaos. Love, in fact, according to Dante, is capable of acting as a disorganising force. (*See* Tozer, *Commentary, in loco.*) Hell, in Dante's view, is a loveless region. Only twice does love seem to enter: it is pathetically but almost impotently present in the case of Francesca; it is present or makes its presence felt by the overthrow of some of the prison walls when Christ won the victory of love for all mankind. Love, therefore, must be regarded as an alien power in hell. It can never be at home there; its very presence bodes ruin to such a realm. It can tolerate nothing which is not in harmony with itself; it must break down all that opposes it, just as it can build up all things which are lovely into beautiful harmony. Like draws to like: the perfect state for all God's children is likeness to Him; Christ's work was to gather together into one all the children of God that

are scattered abroad (John xii. 52), yes, and to sum up all things in Christ (Eph. i. 10): here, according to Apostolic thought, love is harmonising all in one; and this harmonising must mean the disintegration of all the hostile forces, however unexpected they might be. It is strangely true that evil cannot stand without the assistance of good; this is the constant weakness of civilisation as we know it; the evil gains a fictitious permanence because many who are good give it toleration or a pessimistic support. Once let love really rule and good will join with good, and evil will vanish.

> "For evil in its nature is decay,
> And in an hour can wholly pass away."

I am not attributing these thoughts to Dante, though they are the outcome of one of those pregnant fragments of thought which Dante has left hanging, as it were, on the hedges of the way along which his pilgrim feet have trod.

Thus, as we descend the downgoing circles of the *Inferno*, we realise that the measure of wrong is ever the golden rod of love. If we with open eyes could visit for ourselves these sad circles, and if, as we contemplated each scene, we could call to mind the Christian standard of life, repeating softly to ourselves, "Love worketh no ill

to his neighbour," then the ethical significance of all would be clearly disclosed. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour." Oh, poor souls, led astray by the strong passion of the flesh, had this thought filled your heart you would have learned the happy self-denial of love's sacrifice, and found joy instead of sorrow! Oh, miserable ones crouching beneath the noxious showers, had you thought what good you could do to your neighbour, you would have seen what selfishness of soul you were fostering when you indulged the epicure's feast or played the gourmand's part! Oh, men given over to angry and discontented hearts, had you heard this precept—"Love worketh no ill to his neighbour"—you would have banished the brooding and gloomy spirit which betrayed you! Oh, souls in those lower depths where violence and fraud and treachery are laid bare in all their revolting ugliness, how far from you had murder and falsehood been, had you but laid to heart this heavenly principle—"Love worketh no ill to his neighbour"; for had this love been your portion you could not have lifted up the hand of violence against your brother, or plotted against his safety or his home, or given your soul to the treachery which betrayed him to death!

The *Inferno* is the manifestation of evil: it is made to reveal itself in its desolating power. It

becomes a self-revelation: it is the place where God "sets our misdeeds before us and our secret sins in the light of His countenance:" it is, in one sense, self-discovery. It is the realisation of what we are and of what we have lost. We may taste of it in this world. Indeed, old Dekker shrewdly said, "There is a hell named in our creed and a heaven, and the hell comes before: if we look not into the first, we shall never live in the last." It needs no change of locality to enter into hell. Do we not recall the scene in Marlowe's *Faust*? Faust questions Mephistopheles:

Faustus. Where art thou damned?
Mephistopheles. In hell.
Faustus. How comes it, then, that thou art out of hell?
Mephistopheles. Why, this is hell! Nor am I out of it.
Think'st thou that I, that saw the face of God
And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,
Am not tormented with ten thousands hells
In being deprived of everlasting bliss?

Here is the realisation of distance from heaven and deprivation of the face of God. The recognition of sin as it really is makes this realisation of distance and loss painful to the soul. The more love is understood as the moving force of the universe, the more keen will be our sense of sin.

It is thus that the scenes in the *Inferno* find their most vivid colouring when we see them in

the light of an all-ministering love. Love is the measure of life as God means it to be lived: all human actions can only be rightly measured by their relation to love: this is the Christ-given standard: this is the measure of true Christian orthodoxy. In this we may realise how much they lose who measure life by any other standard. Here we may understand that heaven is where love is, and hell is where love is not. And where love is not, God is not. Only lovelessness can banish us from His presence. It is not God who goes far from us: it is we who go from Him. His love may build hell that we may learn the awfulness of separation from Him who is love. Yes, we may even go down into hell and find Him there, as we realise that it is our lovelessness which sets the great impassable gulf between us and Him. The penalties which wait upon wrong are the disciplines of love. Better a thousand times face the evil and bear bravely the consequence of our wrong, than by shirking the pain, set our hearts farther from Him. You remember how Socrates once asked whether it was not the part of friendship to persuade a friend to face the penalty of a broken law rather than to shirk it. Certainly, I am sure that it is better to look frankly into the face of the hell now than to seek refuge in pleasant lies and enfeebling sophistries: better

to go down into hell here and now than to find that in a life of seductive selfishness and chilling lovelessness we have, like Dives, who shirked unpleasant truths, been fixing a great and impassable gulf between ourselves and heaven.

The adage of ancient wisdom, "Know thyself," might be written as the motto of the *Inferno*. Hell is self-revelation—the discovery that self-will and selfishness enclose within us, and may quicken into activity, forces which degrade us and which, when seen in the light of some heavenly vision, make us unclean and hateful in our own eyes. When the vision comes, as to Job, sublime in the pure forces of illimitable Nature, or, as to St Peter, in the homely providence which supplies the need of the critical hour, then men feel not only their littleness but the meanness of their spirit of distrust, and their hearts' cry is of their own shortcomings—like the Patriarch, they will cry, "I abhor myself"; or, like the Apostle, they will confess, "I am a sinful man, O Lord." In such cases it is self-revelation which is effected, and this self-revelation is the essential element of the experience of hell.

It is, therefore, as a great pageant of the self-disclosures of evil that the scenes of the *Inferno* pass before us, and while it embraces the manifestations of the ultimate horror of all kinds of

wrong, the thread which guides us through this labyrinth of the intricate pathways of wrong-doing is the personal story of the poet, who is both the author and the subject of the poem. He too had to go down into hell, and, in seeing this terrible disclosure of evil, he was to discover himself to himself: and therefore to realise the need of that spiritual revolution which alters the centre of gravity of our being, and sets our feet on the upward instead of the downward way.

And sometimes, as I read the poem, one reiterated phrase of well-known music comes back to me and I seem to hear the chorus, amid the glamour of various sounds, repeating with pathetic insistency—"This is the way," "this is the way." And I know that, though it leads through regions of woe and flame and frost, it is often the way of God for men. The pathway to heaven may lead through hell. We may perhaps realise that a profound meaning of comfort sleeps in the declaration of the Creed: "He went down into hell"; for now it is true if He went down perchance some may have found Him there. In a larger and more majestic sense than the Psalmist meant, man can cry, "If I go down into hell, Thou art there." Yes, He is with me in my hell that I may yet climb upward to be with Him in His heaven.

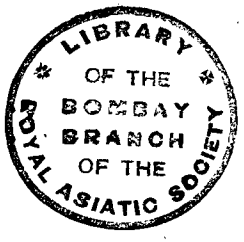
Let none shrink from self-revealings. Better, far better, that here and now we should know the worst about ourselves than that we should discover it for the first time upon the threshold of the other world: better, since all must go down, that we should taste of hell and find that, though dreadful, it may be for us the house of God; for the wonder of this self-revelation is that this taste of hell may be to us the foretaste of heaven. It is love which reveals to us ourselves. It is love which sends forth the pilgrim to search out and know the truth about evil.

As these thoughts become ours, and we understand that this hell may be to us the gateway of heaven, we, with truer and wider outlook than Dante had, may subscribe to his inscription on the portals of the *Inferno*:

> "High justice moved the architect above:
> The power that built me was the power divine:
> Wisdom supreme is marked in every line,
> And over all there broods primeval love."
>
> (*Inf.* iii. 5–8.)

Dante, whose horizon was that of his age, could not behold the full significance of the love in which he so profoundly believed, but we, set free from the misconceptions into which a rationalistic theology had plunged the Church, may enter into

the restored inheritance of Christian liberty, and rejoice to see the good which shines above evil, the love which is destined to conquer, knowing that "the loudest thunders of conscience, instead of being prophetic of endless misery, become to us the sure witnesses of an untiring love which will never cease its efforts to separate us from all evil." How pregnant, in the light of this thought, does that prayer become which the Lord of love taught us when He bade us say, "Our Father which art in heaven, deliver us from evil." Deliver us from evil at whatever cost to us, O Father, who didst not spare Thy Son for our sake. Deliver us from evil, yes, even if Thou dost take us into hell to show us what evil really means! By Thy love, which is sternly resolute and unflinchingly faithful, deliver us from the evil that we may believe in and live by the good alone.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LECTURE IV

EDUCATIVE DISCIPLINE

("PURGATORIO")

THE spirit of hope fills the *Purgatorio*. We feel its breath in the air as we enter this new realm of the divine kingdom. The contrast with the dark region which we have left behind meets us at every turn. The darkness of night brooded there; but the tokens of the dawn greet us here. There the pilgrim passed downward through ever-narrowing circles till the final frozen prison-house was reached: here a broad and luminous horizon smiles, and the great and wide sea before his eyes trembles with the glad thrill of morning. There Lucifer's disastrous wings generated the icy blast: here angels with happy outstretched wings pilot the boat of God's redeemed ones towards the pleasant shore of hope. There every step was downward: here a heaven-pointing hill challenges the travellers to climb upwards. There doleful sounds of sorrow and lamentation are heard: here

are the hymns of the ancient Church : the song of the redeemed Israel—"In exitu Israel"—breaks with aspiring voice upon the ear. The sorrow that endured for a night has given place to the joy which arouses the heart : the spirit of the pilgrim revives : the freedom which he went forth to seek is no longer impossible : happy omens of hope encourage him.

First perhaps among these omens is the sight of the planet of love in the skies. Venus is the morning star : love smiles upon the enterprise. The four stars of the Southern Cross—emblems of the virtues—prudence, fortitude, justice, and temperance—appear in the heavens. The virtues of the soul are in the ascendant : the true aim and purpose of life are restored. The heavens are favourable : the ideals of life are clearly seen ; but is the spirit willing and fit ? The journey is toilful and difficult : only the willing and ready soul can venture upon it.

If the soul has discerned its fault, if the softening influences of true contrition have passed upon it, then the pilgrim may move forward on his path. Therefore is the pilgrim girded with the pliant and continuously growing reed of humility : therefore too must his face be cleansed with the fresh dew of the morning. The childlike spirit—lowly and fresh in feeling—must be his.

The *Purgatorio* is a place of discipline, and, like all places of discipline, it is a place of revelation also. As treated by Dante, it becomes a revelation of his thoughts about sin and freedom and love. The star of love shines at the beginning: the spirit of love triumphs at the close; but meanwhile the discipline of the moral nature must go forward if true freedom is to be won.

The first discipline of the moral nature comes in the form of a number of tests of the genuineness of the moral purpose. "Are your minds set upon righteousness?" asked the Psalmist; and the question confronts the pilgrims as they journey through the Ante-purgatory.

Innocent attractions tempt the pilgrims to delay. How natural it was that Dante should linger when he met Casella; how natural that they should revive old memories and once more find joy in the song so dear to both of them! So Dante asks Casella to sing.

> "Thee may it please to comfort therewithal
> Somewhat this soul of mine."

Hope and love are pleasant companions on the road, but they are not fitting substitutes for active energy of soul. This lingering to listen to sweet words is in little harmony with the earnest and resolute spirit which ought to mark the pilgrim.

So Cato's rebuke breaks in upon the rapt attention of the dilatory souls :

> "What is this, ye laggard spirits?
> What negligence, what standing still is this?
> Run to the mountain to strip off the slough
> That lets not God be manifest to you."
> (*Purg.* ii. 120–123.)

The pleasant seduction of old friends and well-loved songs must be resisted : these things are tests of earnestness of purpose.

So also are the steepness and difficulty of the first stages of the ascent. Here, as always, the earlier steps are the hard ones. Providence tests men by making the first stages of all worthy enterprises difficult. The pilgrims have to search for some gap through which to commence climbing the arduous hill.

> "We came meanwhile unto the mountain's foot;
> There so precipitate we found the rock,
> That nimble legs would there have been in vain.
> 'Twixt Lerici and Turbia, the most desert,
> The most secluded pathway is a stair
> Easy and open, if compared with that."
> (*Purg.* iii. 46–51.)

At last a tiny gap, no wider than a forkful of thorns would fill up, in a hedge is found ; and the hard ascent is begun.

The ascent is difficult, but not all the spirits who find themselves in the Purgatory can commence their pilgrimage. Those only who are ripe and fit may go forward. Some souls are met doomed to wait till the hour of their fitness comes. Men cannot here and now begin to mount higher: they must, before they can climb, "make stepping-stones of their dead selves." Dispositions—fit and genuine dispositions—cannot come at will. This is the mysterious truth men so often forget. "I will repent some day," whispers the self-deceiving soul to itself. But who can command the dispositions of the soul? We cannot deal with the delicate mechanism of the spirit as we can with material things. The soul is an organism which grows, and what it will be at a particular epoch—who can tell? The only certain thing is, that whatever it may be at that epoch, it will certainly not be that which it is now. It will have moved: with its movement it will possess different moods. The only day which is truly ours is to-day. We may have to wait long before the fitting mood, the single-hearted wish for better and higher things, is ours. Many must wander, waiting among the lower spurs of the great mountain of moral endeavour, as the sick and stricken at Bethesda waited for the moving of the waters.

What is wanted is the true and genuine will to repent. It is vain for the pilgrim to present himself at the gate till the spirit is ripe for the discipline and teaching which awaits it. The chastening of the Lord is for those whose spirits are in tune with the divine will. Hence in the Ante-purgatory we meet with different excuses given for delay in repentance. The cares of kingship, the mental indolence which acquiesces in low conventional standards of life, the general readiness to follow the path of least resistance, and the moral injury of ignoring the pleadings of conscience are among the causes of slackness of will. Where this slackness prevails the soul is not truly ripe for pursuing its upward journey.

With a change in the soul there comes a change in environment. In the Ante-purgatory, where the soul is outside the gateway, disturbances of Nature are met which hinder the pilgrim. Snow and sleet may fall and delay him ; but once the gateway is past, Nature offers no hindrance. The face of the sky reflects the state of the pilgrim's soul. We make our own heaven as we make our own fortune : the sullen heaven is often but the reflection of our own gloomy spirits.

"Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie,
Which we ascribe to heaven : the fated sky

Gives us free scope ; only doth backward pull
Our slow designs, when we ourselves are dull."
(*All's Well that Ends Well*, Act I. Sc. i.)

We may recall the words of the sacred writer who reminds us that circumstances help the trustful and courageous soul. "All things work together for good to them that love God."

The Ante-purgatory sets forth in picturesque fashion the conditions preliminary to the effective pilgrimage upward. The pilgrim is going in search of liberty (C. i. 71) ; the liberty, however, is that high and true liberty—liberty within the soul : it is the liberty which means that man is to be true lord of himself : it can be the possession of those only who have learned self-mastery. The first condition for such freedom is the earnest desire to be free. It is

"The door
Which the perverted love of souls disuses,
Because it makes the crooked way seem straight."

Some shun the gate : an evil love turns them aside : they shirk the discipline for

"Che il malo amor dell' anime disusa,
Perchè fa parer dritta la via torta."
(*Purg.* x. 1–3.)

Slackness of soul under such circumstances means halting desire : there is no freedom save for those

who mean to be free. To such, difficulties on the road are challenges to fresh endeavour. The heights must be scaled "with toil of heart and knees and hands." The pilgrims set on such lofty enterprise must "wink no more in slothful overtrust." They must thirst to meet the discipline which will bring them freedom. Like athletes who desire self-sovereignty, the very pain of arduous exercises will be sweet to them.

To such nothing comes amiss : all which comes, even hardship and humiliation, brings the growing capacity for liberty. None can hope to pass the gate who do not possess this fitness of the earnestly courageous spirit, which, knowing the supreme value of this high liberty, is ready to endure pains and penalties to secure it.

The pilgrims, however, are not left unhelped or unprotected even in the Ante-purgatory. God's angels are at hand. The pilgrims stand in need of heavenly help. The subtle power of old sins can make itself felt, especially in the hours of darkness when the watchfulness of the soul relaxes as sleep draws near. Then ill dreams may disturb the rest, and the tyranny of some soul-staining habit may assert itself. Like a gliding serpent, evil may then seek to thrust itself into the pleasant valley of rest (C. viii.). But the pilgrim sees the guardians descending :

"... Two angels with two flaming swords,
Truncated and deprivëd of their points,"
(*Purg.* viii. 26, 27.)

appear, and drive off the invading serpent.

As heavenly help drives away the power of evil dreams, so does its grace bring dreams of good. The soul protected from the invasion of evil imaginings can, as sleep draws near, direct its thoughts to heavenly things: divine light meets its aspirations and lifts the soul as upon eagle's wings heavenward in desire. Such seems to me the significance of Lucia and the eagle (C. ix.): even in the early days of Christian pilgrimage it is possible for the awakened soul to rise above the lower levels of thought and to mount up as with eagle flight towards the higher ranges of the Mount of God. Borne thus in sleep, Dante is brought close to the gateway of the Purgatory proper.

The ceremonials of the gate are full of symbolism; and the poet fortifies his theme with "greater art" (C. ix. 71, 72). The pilgrims saw what seemed a narrow rift through a wall. The approach to the gate is not by the broad way which leads to destruction. As they approached they saw the portal, and "a gatekeeper who yet spake no word." The gatekeeper held in his hand a naked sword; he was seated upon a diamond-like

throne. Three steps led to this throne. The lowest step was "marble-white, polished and smooth": the second, "of deeper hue than perse,"

> "Was of a calcined and uneven stone,
> Cracked all asunder lengthwise and across."

The third appeared like porphyry as flaming red,

> "As blood that from a vein is spirting forth."
> (*Purg.* ix. 98, 99, 102.)

The simplest interpretation of this symbolism is the best. Here, as it seems to me, the attempt to introduce political significance is incongruous and wholly at variance with Dante's spirit, who, when dealing with the deepest personal experiences of the soul, keeps aloof from politics. The three steps symbolise what might have been, what has been, and what must be, if what might have been is to be realised. Life's innocence is stained by sin, and the violence of passion, like fire, cracks and blackens and mars its fair surface. Only by sacrifice can ancient purity be won. Some new and nobler passion must triumph over the passions which have disfigured and half destroyed life. The only passion capable of such a triumph is self-sacrificing love. Here, therefore, upon the threshold of Purgatory the sign of redemption is written. As upon the lintels of the houses of the Israelites at the Passover crisis the blood of

sacrifice was sprinkled, so here at this gateway, which is the threshold of deliverance, the symbol of love's victory may be seen.

And here more clearly than elsewhere may sin be known to be sin : here the pilgrim will know it and feel it as never before. He kneels and the porter at the gate marks upon his brow with the sword point seven P's—wounds, happy wounds, are these upon his forehead ; wounds wholesome as the frank and honest recognition of wrong ; wounds that will be washed away as the pilgrim climbs upward.

Then the golden key and the silver key are used to open the gate. First the silver key, which, if less precious, needs "more art and intellect," is employed to unlock the door. The golden key is the key of divine pardon : the silver is the key of spiritual discernment. The key of pardon is gold and stands for love : the other is the key of knowledge, even skill and insight, to judge whether the soul is ripe for this spiritual pilgrimage. To wield the golden key alone is of little service : it is the silver key which doth the knot unloose (C. ix. 126). This is in harmony with Dante's other declaration (*Inf.* xxvii. 118) :

> "Naught but repentance ever can absolve."

So with the clear acknowledgment of sin written

[illegible]s brow, the pilgrim prepares to pass [illegible]ough the gate. The angel guardian utters the warning against looking back. The gates are pushed open, and as they turn upon their hinges they give forth a harsh and grating sound loud as thunder. It is the moaning protest of reluctant sin, heard like the cry of the demoniac when the Great Healer of men bade the evil spirits depart. If sin makes itself heard, protesting as it were against the opening of the gateway of the soul's deliverance, heavenly music is also heard—the voices of glad souls singing the Te Deum of praise that another soul has entered upon the homeward path. Thenceforward the real work of the pilgrim in Purgatory begins. He enters upon the path of serious self-discipline: he submits willingly to the exercises needful for his purgation.

There are three ways in which sin may be regarded. It may be regarded as an abiding fact—an act done, which not even omnipotence can undo: in this light it is a stain upon the divine purity of things. The act cannot be undone, but the stain may be blotted out. Forgiveness is needed for acts such as these. But sin is also a violation of the divine order: it is something which has set at work laws which are unfailing in operation: every act is followed by consequences, and there is no escape from the consequences of

our wrong-doing. "Whatsoever a man [illegible] that shall he reap." God does not let us off [illegible] penalty, though He may forgive the sin. There is a third aspect of sin. It is a symptom of a spirit which is not in full harmony with the divine order: it is the sign of what we may call spiritual disease. This is a condition of the soul, and from this the soul needs to be set free. There is the need of inward purification.

The pilgrim who enters the gate of Purgatory enters as a forgiven soul. His pardon has been pronounced, but pardon does not free from penalty. The soul has learned that the impulse to flee and hide from God is a vain one. The vision of the *Inferno* has shown that there is no escape from the hand of omnipotent love. The penitent soul flees to God. He will not hide from God: he will hide in God: he will accept the penalty of his wrong-doing—nay, the spirit which animates him is a spirit which seeks willingly to face the consequences of his fault. His will is one with the divine will: he surrenders himself to God, though God may be a consuming fire, for his soul longs for purification.

In the *Purgatorio* therefore we meet scenes in which the penalty of consequence falls upon the wrong-doer. In this the *Purgatorio* resembles the *Inferno*: sin meets with its consequences;

but the difference between the two realms arises from the different spirit which prevails among the sufferers. In the *Inferno* we see the penalty as it falls on those whose will is still one with the sin. In the *Purgatorio* the penalty falls on those who are eager to be set free from the dominion of their sin. The sinners in the *Inferno* would fain be free to sin : the souls in the *Purgatorio* long to be freed from the servitude of sin. For such souls the penalty becomes a purifying power. This kind of spirit is illustrated in Mr G. B. Burgin's novel, *The Vision of Balmaine*. The readiness to bear the penalty becomes a remedial power and acts with invigorating and elevating effects upon the character. It is well to mark the inner significance of the *Divina Commedia*, for the spiritual significance often furnishes the key of the outward form.

The discipline of the *Purgatorio* therefore becomes a training in self-mastery. The penalties exacted are appropriate to the fault, and the exercises are graduated, if we may use the expression, so as to produce right conditions. Like the exercises at Nauheim, they are calculated to restore the full and normal action of the heart, and to give that facility of self-government which is perfect freedom.

We may note the way in which the penalties

are regulated to meet the varying needs of different souls.

The seven sins dealt with are pride, envy, anger, gloom or lukewarmness, avarice, gluttony, lust. We note at once that the first three and the last three may be grouped together. Pride, envy, anger are faults of the spirit: they show themselves in emotions; avarice, gluttony, lust are passions of action. Between these two groups stands lukewarmness or gloom: this is the transitional fault. It is the mood which may bring about faults worse than itself. We may recall that in the *Inferno* also the spirit of gloomy discontent holds a similar transitional place between the sins of the flesh and those of deeper spiritual force.

Many have sought to bring the catalogue of sins in the *Purgatorio* into harmony with that in the *Inferno*. It may be possible to do so, although the absence of pride among the sins of the *Inferno* constitutes a difficulty. But is it necessary to bring about such a harmony? The order and arrangement in each case is fitted to the poet's purpose. His object in the *Inferno* is to depict sin revealing itself in its true and hateful meaning: his object in the *Purgatorio* is to exhibit the fitting discipline of sin. In the one case it is the manifestation of sin. In the other it is its purification.

Hence the order in which sins are presented is reversed in the *Purgatorio*.

In the *Inferno* he wished to show how evil a thing sin is, to show vice its own image; he takes sins therefore which in their very activity on earth had shown how evil they were, and he seeks in the vivid picturing of the *Inferno* to paint them in all their ugly consequences to the sinner and to the world. But in the *Purgatorio* his aim is different: he does not now wish merely to unveil evil; he is thinking how its very roots may be destroyed. The sphere, towards which his gaze is directed now, is not the great world of men and of their responsible activities; it is now into the spirit of man that he looks: how may the spirit be purged? The root of bitterness is there. He seizes on one great principle, which perverted or weakened or over-stimulated may work evil in the soul, and he seeks to show how these maladies of the spirit may be healed, and, as a result, he deals with sin in its inward and spiritual aspect chiefly. He does not need therefore to make excursions into the realms of consequence as he does in the *Inferno*. He is not now dealing on a large scale with the great law of retribution; he is dealing with spiritual disorder. In the *Inferno* he is looking at human life and conduct with the eye of a judge: in the *Purgatorio* he is looking with

the eye of a physician who desires to heal the diseases of the soul.

The real harmony between the two lists lies in human nature, and in the way in which sin develops or sinfulness can be counteracted. In the *Inferno*, as we descend, the sins increase in gravity: they begin with sins of impulse: they go on to sins of discontent, leading to sins of recklessness and violence, and culminating in sins deliberate and craftily designed and treacherously executed. It shows the downward progress of the soul—falling first through unguarded moments and at length clasping evil as its good. In the *Purgatorio*, the seat of evil in the spirit is first dealt with: the purgation moves from the centre of man's being outward: the wave of purifying power moves in ever-widening circle till man's whole being is embraced by its influence.

Hence in the *Purgatorio* sins are presented in an order the reverse of that in the *Inferno*.

The sins which may be called sins of the flesh stand first in the *Inferno*: they come last in the *Purgatorio*. And rightly so; for to bring about perfect purification the inward disposition must first be attacked. There is no purification of life or habits of life, without purification of the soul within. Hence the soul must be liberated from the evil dispositions of pride, envy, and anger, as

these so often become the incentives of the baser passions. Avarice may be generated through envy, and lust may build her shrine "hard by hate." However this may be, the inward dispositions must first be regulated in order that the spirit may regain its rightful ascendancy over the realm of its being.

Further, the relation between the various faults is set forth by their connection with a common root. Dante's exposition in the seventeenth canto tells us that, in his view, a perverted form of love leads to all the faults that are expiated in the *Purgatorio*.

To understand this we must anticipate and become auditors of the conversation which takes place later on, but which is better considered here, for it sets forth how love enters into the discipline of this second realm.

We must ascend to the fourth cornice, for it is at the entrance of this—the middle point of pilgrimage—that Virgil gives an exposition of the relationship between the various sins here chastened.

In the terraces beneath, and in those above, the faults are those which give rise to sins of action. Pride, envy, and anger are seldom passive; these are purged below. Avarice, gluttony, lust, these are essentially active in their

nature: these are purged above. The middle circle deals, and alone deals, with a fault passive in its nature: it is like a point of rest between two lines of activity: it is the equinox of faults: those beneath and those above are active in their nature, but active in different directions. Pride, envy, and anger are active in the soul: their range of injury is within the spirit first, whatever outward injury they may inflict upon others later. Avarice, gluttony, lust are eager to seize upon what is material: their outlook is on the physical world and their first range of injury is upon things external. The line of their advance is through the material world, whatever injury they may later bring upon the spirit within. They move into a different hemisphere from the more spiritual passions of pride, envy, and anger. The ecliptic line from the passions of the spirit to the passions of a more material order passes through the negative point, where the fault is slothful indifference.

If we keep this point in mind we shall be the better able to understand the exposition which Virgil gives, and we may also be in a position to apprehend the principle which underlies Dante's treatment and classification of sins both in the *Purgatorio* and in the *Inferno*.

We can now take our place beside Dante: we find him resting, as a tired man might, and en-

gaged in conversation with his guide. He is half-way through his wonderful pilgrimage in a double sense—he has left the *Inferno* behind: the *Paradiso* is still in front of him. He is in the *Purgatorio*, the realm of his central experiences, and he is in the very midst of his experiences there. He has reached the fourth circuit of the hill, three terraces have been surmounted, three more lie above him. At this mid-point of his journey he felt his strength failing him:

"O virtù mia, perchè sì ti dilegue?
Fra me stesso dicea, chè mi sentiva
La possa delle gambe posta in tregue."
(*Purg.* xvii. 73–75.)

Night was upon them: the day has been one of strenuous fatigue. In the night their journeying must cease; but, though wearied in body, Dante is yet keen to learn: the time of opportunity for enlightening converse has come. Their position is, to use Dante's image, like that of a ship which has dropped anchor and awaits the morning, when it can cross the harbour-bar: the little barque of his genius, as he called it (*Purg.* i. 2), can now ride in safe waters. As they must wait, let the time not be lost; though the feet tarry, let not learning stand still.

"Se i piè si stanno, non stea tuo sermone."
(*Purg.* xvii. 84.)

Thus Dante makes an opportunity for enlarging upon his conception of love and expounding its wide-reaching power.

It is the fitting place for such an exposition. Let us recall the significance of this middle cornice on the Mountain of Purgatory. It is the circuit in which the sin called *accidia* (*Purg.* xviii. 132) is purged away: it is the vice of slothful indifference, reluctance to put forth effort, the state of mind to which no stimulus of outward circumstance or of noble imagination seems to appeal. This middle vice of the *Purgatorio* corresponds to the middle vice of the *Inferno*, for in the fifth circle in which the gloomy and discontented souls were confined in the murky waters of the Styx: the incentives of fleshly and worldly passions no longer appealed to them, and, sceptical of pleasure, they lacked the energy which led other souls to reckless defiance of God's order or violence against it (*Inf.* ix.–xv.). These souls had their doom in the gloomy waters, buried away from the pleasant light of the sun: they were stagnant beings thrust into stagnant waters. Their fault was anger and indolence. Here in the *Purgatorio* the similar fault of slothful indifference is purged, not by an enforced inaction but by compelled activity: the souls are impelled to ceaseless movement, they are all seen running, and as they go

they cry out words of haste—"Haste; haste to waste not time." And here Dante makes Virgil the exponent of his views.

Virgil's exposition of sins purged in the *Purgatorio* starts with a central idea, viz. love. Love is a necessary possession of all. All have this capacity of love, Creator and creature alike:

"'Nè creator, nè creatura mai,'
Comminciò ei, 'figliuol, fu senza amore.'"
(*Purg.* xvii. 91–92.)

Here is the first proposition laid down. This proposition is enlarged in the next line, which shows the twofold quality of love: love may be natural or rational:

"O naturale, o d' animo: e tu il sai."
(*Purg.* xvii. 93.)

Natural love is harmless always:

"Lo natural è sempre senza errore."
(*Purg.* xvii. 94.)

The evil comes in when the love is a love *d' animo*. Natural affection if left to itself is always free from error, but the other love may land us in wrong, and that in three ways: it may fasten upon a wrong object, or it may be lacking in vigour, or it may be vigorous overmuch:

"Ma l' altro puote errar per malo obbietto,
O per poco, o per troppo di vigore."
(*Purg.* xvii. 95, 96.)

When love moves along the line of Nature, and when it is kept within fitting limits, being neither defective nor excessive, all is well; but when it is twisted in a wrong direction, or when, without being diverted to evil objects, it shows itself slack or unrestrained in the pursuit of good, then evil comes, for the creature is then working against the Creator:

"Ma quando al mal si torce, o con più cura,
O con men che non dee corre nel bene,
Contra il fattore adopra sua fattura."
(*Purg.* xvii. 100–102.)

The conclusion to which Virgil directs Dante then is clear. Love is found to be the source of all good and evil in man. It is a power in his being, and according to its direction and its use is the measure of the man's life. "Tell me how a man loves and I will tell you his worth" might be made the summary of Virgil's exposition. The universe is never without love: there is no other beginning of things than this. Love built even hell: love is the atmosphere of heaven: love is the measure of man upon earth.

When we have fixed in our minds this principle, we shall be able to enter more completely into the

scenes of the *Purgatorio*. The first three terraces show us the purgatorial process against pride, envy, and anger. These faults are, according to Dante, examples of twisted and distorted love. No man hates himself, and no man wills to hate God, but love distorted may wish ill to his neighbour. Pride seeks to lower others, because it seeks to raise self. The wish to exalt self leads to the wish to see one's neighbour humbled. The presence of pride discloses itself in subtle and unexpected ways. Why do we take pleasure in our neighbour's misfortunes? Is not the strange sensation of satisfaction which we feel the pulse of our unsubdued pride? This uncanny but pleasing thrill is the wicked chuckle of our pride. On this platform stands La Rochefoucauld's cynical saying: "We have all enough patience to bear our neighbour's misfortunes." "Pride," as Thomas Aquinas writes, "is said to be the love of our own excellence, in so far that out of love arises an overweening presumption of our right to overtop others, which fitly belongs to pride."[1]

The next step is envy, which Benvenuto da Imola calls the daughter of pride. The fear of losing one's importance or place in the esteem of

[1] *Summ. Theol.*, Pt. II., 2da, qu. clxii., art. 3, quoted in Vernon's *Purgatorio*, vol. ii. p. 63, 3rd ed.

the world makes us dread the good fortune of others. Pride can take pleasure in the misfortunes of others because it can be complacent in its own security; but pride begets envy when the star of others is in the ascendant, for fear then points at the occultation of our own star. Pride looks with pleased eye upon another's fall: envy looks with the eye of dislike upon another's rise. So much is envy distressed by the good fortune of another that at last it begins to appear as a positive injury, and a justifiable cause of anger. Thus anger may be the daughter of envy, as envy is the daughter of pride—so closely are these three—pride, envy, and anger—related to one another.

Now, these three are all sins within the soul: they are infirmities of the heart: distortions of love, according to Dante, and they must be dealt with first of all in the process of spiritual purgation. Life moves from within outwards: the heart is the well-spring of all conduct. The purifying process must commence at the centre: the head-spring must be made sweet. So Dante shows us in the earlier terraces how these three inner maladies of the soul are dealt with.

Pride is weighed down with heavy burden, and her eyes are turned to the path she treads. Dante saw approaching him figures so deformed as not to look human, he turned to Virgil for explanation:

. . . . "Maestro, quel ch' io veggio
Mover a noi, non mi sembran persone,
E non so che, sì nel veder vaneggio."
(*Purg.* x. 112–114.)

They went, these crumpled figures, bowed as a corbel figure bent to support a roof, weary they went round the first circuit of the mountain, purging the world's gross darkness off their souls.

"Purgando le caligini del mondo."
(*Purg.* xi. 30.)

For pride spreads such thick darkness before the eyes: the eye is not single: the body cannot be full of light. "Take heed," said Christ, "that the light that is in thee be not darkness." The proud soul lives in an unreal world, taking false for true and true for false. He loses the joys and the powers of this life, for he cannot rejoice with those that rejoice or weep with those that weep: his perverted affection leads to inverted views of life: his pride bids him rejoice when others weep and weep when others rejoice. Love with sweet naturalness can share a brother's joys and sorrows, but pride perverts the soul and gives distorted views of all life's circumstances. But here in Purgatory right vision is first insisted upon. The [redacted] weights upon the sinful heads compel them to look down: here is wise retribution of the

pride which could not condescend to men of low estate but minded high things! Now they must look low, and pay heed to the road that Providence bids them tread, and lo! on the roadside and upon the ground they traverse are written the revelations of life's meanings, which pride had made them miss. The mountain wall beside them is of white marble. On it are sculptured scenes setting forth, in images which seem to breathe, the story of the higher joys which they had missed through pride. Upon the pavement that they trod are pictured instances of historic pride, set forth in better semblance than can be seen in sculptured memorials of the dead (*Purg.* xii. 16–24). Proud Lucifer was sculptured there: Apollo, Mars, and Pallas among the ancient gods. Nimrod stood bewildered among the confounded throng thwarted in their enterprise of the heaven-reaching tower of Babel. Niobe, in a trance of woe, was there: Arachne, half spider: Rehoboam, fear-smitten, flying in his chariot, and others, their story skilfully told:

> "Qual di pennel fu maestro o di stile,
> Che ritraesse l' ombre e i tratti, ch' ivi
> Mirar farieno ogn' ingegno sottile?
> Morti li morti, e i vivi parean vivi."
>
> (*Purg.* xii. 64–

The pictures thus seen are intended to be ince[illegible]

tives to humility and restraints on pride. On the wall are scenes to awaken love and admiration of humility: on the pavement are those which warn against the consequences of pride: the former are intended to act as a scourge, driving souls towards good: the latter the bridle restraining them from ill. The incentives to virtue come first, and this is right. In the process of purification the attraction of what is good should come first. Disciplinarians who do not understand human nature too often invert this order, or, indeed, omit the first altogether. Their only method seems to be to lay stress upon the evil; their preaching is of terror; but if we are to overcome evil, let it be by good. If we cannot awaken love and admiration of good we shall never expel the evil. The consequences of broken moral order are terrific, and they cannot be ignored; but they are of the nature of law, and law, though just and good, makes nothing perfect.

To tell man how bad a thing evil is does not help much towards good. The vision of what is good is more powerful. Christ transformed the world, not by denunciation but by example. In Him the picture of good became so lovely and so divine that men have ever since been drawn towards His ideal of good. Dante, therefore, with wise thought describes first the scenes which appeal to the love of good, while his prudence

of truth compels him to set forth the warning examples of the disasters wrought through pride. Thus pride is the first sin which is attacked by the discipline of God.

The entrance to the kingdom is through the gate of humility: men who would win the battle against themselves must gird themselves with humility—the spirit of teachableness: they must become as little children, for he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. We do not wonder, then, that the prayer which is heard within this region of pride is just the Lord's Prayer. These sinners are being taught once more to kneel at a Father's knee, to say "Our Father," and so to claim as their help Him who is bound to their weakness by a Father's love.

Envy is the daughter of pride. Pride is, in the first aspect, a sin against God: it is Lucifer's sin, as Milton declares when he writes of the time when

> "His pride
> Had cast him out from Heaven, with all his host
> Of rebel Angels."

It is the sin which leads to the ambition of self-exaltation—the sin by which, in Shakespeare's view, the angels fell (*Henry VIII.*, Act III. Sc. ii.). "Prima è superbia d' ogni mal radice" are the words in the work called Dante's *Credo*. Pride is

first, but envy is the offspring of pride, and comes next under correction. In fact the sin against God breeds the sin against man. The proud carry weights which compel them to lowliness; the envious have their eyes sewn up with iron wires. The significance of the chastisement is clear. Envy seals the eyes to love's light. "Life," says Dante, "should be a banquet of large and generous hospitality. Everywhere voices may be heard inviting men to partake of its good things; but the eyes of envy are closed to such joys. To them life has not been the table of love" (*mensa d'amor*) (*Purg.* xiii. 27). In vain for them the feast of life was spread: they cannot share it, poor souls. "Vinum non habent"—they have no wine. They lack the wine of love, which makes glad the heart of man: envy scants the measure of life's kindlier impulses. These, the victims of envy, now find that in shutting out pure love they have shut out light. Envy teaches hate, and "he that hateth his brother is in darkness and walketh in darkness" (1 John ii. 11).

We may put the analysis of this state of soul in another form: envy stints generosity, because love perverted becomes selfish and selfishness becomes cruel: it forbids the generous hand as well as the generous thought: love—true love—the love which is divine—forsakes the soul which

shuts up his compassion from his brother (1 John iii. 17). At the critical moment of life's banquet they have no wine, as the foolish virgins at the hour of the bridegroom's coming had no oil; the oil, which St Augustine held to mean love, was lacking when most needed. Oil and wine, which the good Samaritan, the man of ready and courageous love, found most effectual in the treatment of his fallen neighbour, are, like love, healing and gladdening medicines in life.

And here comes one of those exquisitely beautiful phrases in which Dante discloses his tenderness of heart. He sweetly introduces a rebuke to himself in the narrative, and in doing so expresses his own large and loving habit of thought. As he passes among those souls, whose wire-closed eyelids gush forth with tears, he asks whether anyone worth remembering is among them: he casts the question in the form which implies that only souls of his countrymen were thus worthy. Is there among you any Latin soul? In reply a voice comes from a distance and speaks one of the most beautiful sentences in the poem: these souls are bound together by the tie of common suffering: the distinctions which earthly pride may make have no place among them: plunged into faithful chastisement as they are, their citizenship is above:

"O frate mio, ciascuna è cittadina
D' una vera città."

(*Purg.* xiii. 94.)

Each one is a citizen of the true city of God. Poor, envy-tortured and blinded souls, that sit like a row of mendicants outside a church—outcasts as they seem—they yet belong to the brotherhood of the eternal city. Here the measureless pity of Dante breaks forth in words that rebuke his own pride of birth and ancestry: and as they break forth we know that they come from the deep fount of his own tender love. The poet shows here the love of love which possesses also the hate of hate.

We ought not to quit this episode without recalling the spirit which spoke this gentle rebuke. The commentators speak hardly of her: they neither like her nor the way she tells the story of herself and of her doom. She was one Sapia by name, who hated the Sienese and prayed for their defeat: she stood at a window from which she could see the impending battle: her sin was her joy at the overthrow of others:

"Fui degli altrui danni
Più lieta assai, che di ventura mia."

(*Purg.* xiii. 110, 111.)

In her mad joy when she witnessed the defeat, she cried, "Now, O God, do with me what Thou

wilt, all the ill that Thou canst; for now I shall live happy and die content." Here, poor soul, she meets the bitter chastening of her envious delight in the misfortunes of others. Her sin may have been crude and vulgar: her narrative prolix and self-centred; but surely we can perceive the good which is being wrought in her. She has no longer any venom in her soul: she is among many who have been, perchance, more wickedly envious than she; but she thinks no scorn of any. They are fellow-citizens in God's city, which hath foundations. Her heart goes out to them all with a love which recognises their higher destiny, and her voice is lifted up to defend them from the disparagement of a chance passer-by. Love is at work in the spot where envy is being subdued. Yes, love is at work, says Dante himself: the penalty meted out to those souls is inflicted by love:

> "Questo cinghio sferza
> La colpa della invidia, e però sono
> Tratte d' amor le corde della ferza."
>
> (*Purg.* xiii. 37–39.)

By love alone can envy be cast out, and so the lashes of the scourge are wielded by love.

Dante explains how this can be: envy grows in the heart when the heart is set upon things temporal. The material advantages of the world

are limited. The soul grows envious of the prosperity of another because he fears that this may mean less for him. According to the worldly measure, the more my neighbour has the less will be mine: hence my envy and my hate. But with heavenly possessions it is not so: no fear of lessened good dwells in the heart of him who desires the supreme good, for, unlike earthly goods, the more it is shared the more it becomes: those who hunger and thirst for righteousness gain when others gain in righteousness: no fear of loss dwells in the breast which longs for God:

". . . se l' amor della spera suprema
Torcesse in suso il desiderio vostro,
Non vi sarebbe al petto quella tema."

(*Purg.* xv. 52.)

The more men enter into the partnership of love, the more does love abound. As in the feeding of the multitudes, all may partake and yet abundance be left. The very happiness of heaven grows, the more there are who truly love. If more to love, then more love, even as a mirror which reflects more light as more light is poured upon it:

"E quanta gente più lassù s' intende,
Più v' è da bene amare, e più vi s' ama,
E come specchio l' uno all' altro rende."

(*Purg.* xv. 73–75.)

The warnings against envy are derived from Cain and Aglauros. Two voices, like successive peals of thunder, were heard. The first was that of Cain, crying, "Everyone that findeth me shall slay me": the second was that of Aglauros, who, through jealousy of her sister Herse, refused to admit Hermes after having accepted from him a bribe of gold: her voice is heard saying, "I am Aglauros who was turned to stone." Envy hardens the heart. Such is the warning which is heard as the pilgrims are about to leave the second terrace; but the canto is not to close with a warning voice which might strike terror into the heart. When all is still, Virgil speaks and draws attention to the beauties and splendours with which heavenly love surrounds man. Heaven is calling men upward; eternal glories are around: it is the earth-directed gaze which proves men's ruin. It is not one fault only, viz. envy, which causes the trouble: it is the low attitude of mind out of which envy springs:

"Chiamavi il cielo, e intorno vi si gira,
Mostrandovi le sue bellezze eterne,
E l' occhio vostro pure a terra mira;
Onde vi batte chi tutto discerne."

(*Purg.* xiv. 148–151.)

Men should lay the blame upon their low desires,

rather than complain of heaven's chastisement. With a vision of a radiant angel, and the sound of voices which sing "Blessed are the merciful" and "Rejoice thou that conquerest," the pilgrims pass on to the next terrace, and enter upon a stairway less steep than those previously encountered.

The upward way becomes easier as men ascend. The hardest fight against bad habits comes at the beginning; here, if anywhere, "well begun is half done." More than this—pride and envy are sins of the spirit. The later sins come forth into more visible shape: even anger tends to express itself strongly in action. We are more readily aware of anger than we are of envy or of pride. These, therefore, being more subtle and inconspicuous, are more difficult to conquer: the first battle is within, and the first battle is also the hardest, as it is a battle with foes hard to detect and hard to subdue. Henceforth the stairways are less steep.

Thus the cornice of anger is reached. A smoke dense as night here meets them: it was blinding and suffocating. Dante compares it to the gloom of hell: it was as though the murky and acrid atmosphere of the *Inferno* had risen up against them. It is the terrace of anger, and anger lives in the atmosphere of hell: it is so dark that Dante kept in close touch with Virgil, who bids

him not separate from him. Voices came out of the thick darkness—the voices of people who prayed. One word, uttered by all in unison, made up their prayer—" O Lamb of God." Tormented with wrath, they invoked Him who is their peace. These are the souls who march on, so Dante says, to loose the knot of anger. The image is striking, for anger tangles up life into strange knots, and many a man has had to walk far before he can disentangle matters which his hasty wrath has thrown into confusion.

Examples which show the spirit of forbearance follow : the Virgin utters the words, " Why hast thou thus dealt with us ?" The example of Pisistratus gives place to that of St Stephen, who, with eyes fixed upon heaven, prayed for his murderers.

The teaching here turns upon freewill. There may be a planetary influence in each man's life, but the heavenly influence is there also, and that is stronger : man therefore can choose his path.

Evil begins with delight in some trifling pleasure : the soul is deceived into thinking that it has within its grasp the highest good. It pursues this fancied good, if a restraining Providence does not intervene and turn the love into a better direction. There is no attempt to deal specifically with anger. We are left to infer

that the disappointments of life, which provoke the spirit of envy, lead on to anger and to the spiritual and moral perils which accompany it.

With the benediction—"Blessed are the peace-makers"—the pilgrims pass upward to the central cornice of the Purgatory. At this point the faults which are more distinctly faults of the spirit are being left behind. Beyond and above, the faults which touch more closely upon material and physical things meet their chastisement. Below, the sins which, according to Dante, arise from distorted or perverted love have been disciplined, and the opposing qualities of humility, pity, and the peaceful spirit have been summoned to counteract or expel them.

So we reach the central cornice, of which we have spoken: it shows us the sin of love which has grown slack, even to indifference. Here Virgil, as guide, the exponent of true reason, as we have seen, explains how pure love, perverted, slack, or wrongly stimulated, becomes the source of the seven sins which mark the seven terraces of the Purgatory. This central cornice is, as we have already noted, the transition cornice, which separates the sins more deeply hidden in the heart from those which are more readily manifested in action and life. It forms the point at which heaven's measure and earth's measure intersect.

The vice of indifference or slackness in moral effort may be reached from above or from below. Pride, envy, and anger may at last give way, but they may leave the spirit without moral sympathy enough for moral activity. On the other hand, the vices of self-indulgence—fleshly passions and spendthrift habits or greed of gain—may culminate in spiritual lethargy. Slackness may, however, be a sin which has not arisen as a reaction or culmination of other faults: it may be the characteristic attitude of a man whose life is not marked by any conspicuous vices: mere self-centredness of life may bring about moral inertia, and the soul may grow irresponsive to the higher spiritual appeal. In this case love, which should be quick, sensitive, and active, droops into an easy indifference, from which again it might readily pass into hardness of heart.

It is significant that to the sinners in this cornice no form of prayer or words of scripture are given: it is as though the spiritual lethargy rendered them incapable of adequate spiritual responsiveness: it may be that their chastisement, which was to live in perpetual haste, was unsuitable, as Dr Moore suggests, to the exercise of quiet meditation and prayer. Was it needful for them to be roused into activity before they could usefully enter upon the more peaceful exercises of

devotion? Their moral inertia must be overcome before the statutes of the Lord could become their delight. Or is it, as Dr Carroll inclines to think, that one discipline of spiritual slothfulness is to be deprived of that privilege of prayer which they had been so indolent in using on earth? Their lot is to be driven into activity: to feel the stirrings of new desire, the desire of those spiritual advantages so long neglected. Thus at length a strong and wholesome sorrow fills their hearts. Earnest and active longings awaken within, and they can pass upward with the beatitude, "Blessed are they that mourn," ringing in their ears, like the music of new hope.

Avarice, gluttony, and lust—these are the successive sins which last need purgation. Avarice is the sin of the world: gluttony and lust are sins of the flesh. Avarice is the sin of old age: gluttony prevails in middle life, and lust in the days of what Dante would call youth. All are sins against highest love: all are symptoms of uncontrolled desire or unreasonable love. Avarice is undue love of worldly possessions. Gluttony is undue love of another earthly good—food. Lust is the undue love of one of earth's blessings—the love of woman.

Love is the root of all joy and power and progress. If directed aright, trained and disciplined

fitly, and kept always in the highest plane, it becomes a real force helping man forward and upward. Ill-directed or ill-disciplined, it becomes the source of degradation and calamity, and brings about a condition in which outward discipline becomes imperative.

Avarice—this vice has one terrible power in it: life tends to strengthen it. It is the vice of old age in the sense that the experiences of life are often taken as an excuse—and a powerfully plausible one—for niggardliness. It calls itself prudence: it withers the love of better and nobler things, and renders all work valueless (*Purg.* xix. 121–123). The vital power goes out of every effort: so these sinners lie prostrate on the ground, useless and unprogressive. Their faces are set now, as in their life below, earthward. Like the fallen angels who, even in heaven, looked not upward to God but downward to gain:

"... Mammon led them on;
Mammon, the least erected spirit that fell
From heaven; for e'en in heaven his looks and thoughts
Were always downward bent, admiring more
The riches of heaven's pavement, trodden gold,
Than aught divine or holy else enjoyed
In vision beatific."

(*Paradise Lost*, Book I.)

Similarly, Dante explains that it was the lack of the

upward look of the soul which wrought calamity to these poor sinners :

> "Sì come l' occhio nostro non s' aderse
> In alto, fisso alle cose terrene,
> Così giustizia qui a terra il merse."
> (*Purg.* xix. 118–120.)

The voice which speaks on this cornice is that of Hugh Capet : he sets forth the stories of those whose examples may serve to edify and warn the sinners who learn as they lie prostrate. Hugh Capet speaks as one who is himself undergoing the chastisement of this fault. He speaks as a representative of these sufferers and also as the head of his family.

The story of this family, according to Dante, is the story of a vice which grows by what it feeds upon. When the family was poor they could feel a noble shame, but as they won possessions, and the "great dower of Provence" became theirs, the hideous thirst of acquisitiveness grew. They became lost to shame, and their greed of gain brought sorrow to the world and to themselves.

As the pilgrims move onward Statius corrects a misunderstanding. Avarice is often considered to be merely or mainly the desire to gain and to keep. The poet explains that the spendthrift must

suffer as the miser. The prodigal is as the man greedy of gain; for both show a lack of understanding the true value of possessions. In their handling of them the prodigal and the miserly only look earthward: both fail to turn the eye upward and realise the sacred opportunity which comes to those who live.

One graceful touch of life's unknown influences is given here. The meeting of Statius with Virgil is represented as a pleasure to both the elder poets. Through Juvenal, according to Dante, Virgil in the Limbo has become acquainted with the works of Statius, and they meet as those meet who have formed such appreciative opinions of each other that they are prepared to be more than friendly. Love of his writings has awakened in Virgil a love for Statius himself; so Virgil first expresses himself by laying down a general proposition; we may love one we have never seen, but when this love shows itself it wakens a responsive love:

> "Amore,
> Acceso di virtù, sempre altro accese,
> Pur che la fiamma sua paresse fuore."
> (*Purg.* xxii. 10–12.)

Again, Virgil had heard from Juvenal that Statius loved his works, and he admits that this knowledge aroused in him an affection and interest in Statius,

and he looks forward to the pleasure of Statius's company for the rest of the mountain journey :

> "Mia benvoglienza inverso te fu quale
> Più strinse mai di non vista persona,
> Sì ch' or mi parran corte queste scale."
> (*Purg.* xxii. 16–18.)

Thus Virgil speaks in gracious courtesy, and now Statius acknowledges a yet heavier debt to Virgil. He owes it to Virgil that his lot is not cast in the lower world of the *Inferno*, among the prodigals and misers who roll their heavy burdens against one another. Virgil's words in the third *Æneid* had laid hold upon his attention. When he read

> "Quid non mortalia pectora cogis
> Auri sacra fames ? "

he realised his peril and saw that wanton prodigality as well as miserliness was a misuse of opportunity : this led to his repentance of this and other sins.

This is a human touch, because it tells of the lasting power of thought, of the happy influence of words long after the writer of the words has passed away. There is too a large-mindedness on the part of the Christian poet in attributing the change in Statius's life to the words of a heathen poet.

The onward progress of the pilgrims has not ceased: indeed, the conversation upon which we have lingered takes place after the angel voice, saying "Blessed are they that thirst," had dismissed the pilgrims from the fifth cornice.

In this sixth cornice the coarse sin of gluttony or love of appetite is chastened. The souls, with their lean and starved appearance, suffer from hunger and thirst, standing beneath the branches of a tree laden with fruit, longing, like children, to eat: the eager appetite remains, but in this region of discipline it cannot be satisfied. There is another tree—the tree of temperance: a tree whose fruit is hard to reach—hard to find pleasure in,—yet the tree of frugal fare is the tree of life to such men: simple food and clear water may be sweet as the richest banquet. For such sinners these two trees have been prepared: the first which bears the fruit of temperance: the second which bears fruit that appeals to gluttonous desire; the first of which men eat for strength: the second for appetite. So the sixth cornice is passed, which shows love grown gross through over-indulgence of bodily desire. The benediction with which the pilgrims are dismissed tells that through discipline desire has been restored within its proper bounds by the awakening of the nobler hunger—"Blessed are they that hunger,"

says the heavenly voice; and we know that the hunger is for righteousness, and that the love of what is high has expelled the love of what is low.

There are reasons which make our study of the seventh cornice a study of special interest: it is the cornice in which the last of the seven sins is purged. Love is the keynote of the whole poem, and love, as Dante admitted, was the master of his life. This terrace, therefore, in which love has blazed into passionate desire, is one which touches closely the personal life of the poet. It is not part of my task to enter into controversy upon this: I can only deal with this as far as my purpose compels me.

Briefly we may recall the purification which awaits the souls in this place: they must pass through the cleansing fire. The symbolism is clear enough: love in these sinners had fallen into the ways of grossness: they had allowed it to become tempestuous and to force its way through the baser channels of life. Such a love needs purifying: the hot passion needs the cleansing flame: the earthliness must be burnt out of it. Flames break forth from the terrace embankment: a breeze from the edge of the cornice blows them back, and leaves at intervals a narrow path of safety. It is a path which needs

to be walked warily lest one fall over the precipice on the one side or stumble into the fire on the other. The pilgrims here must go one by one :

> " Per questo loco
> Si vuol tenere agli occhi stretto il freno,
> Perocch' errar potrebbesi per poco."
> (*Purg.* xxv. 118–120.)

With a strict rein upon the eyes must he go who would curb wandering desire. The patriarch made a covenant with his eyes (Job xxxi. 1) in this matter. The passion of this desire in the *Inferno* had grown to a tyrannous blast which for ever drove its victims onward—the slaves of a force which they themselves had evoked. Here in the *Purgatorio* the blast plays its part too : from the cornice edge the wind blows against the flame—driving it back to make the narrow path of safety, and at the same time fanning the flame : thus alternately the fire is forced back and then quickened to fiercer flame. So in the fight against passion, the very restraint which is chosen or imposed, while it sometimes seems to open the strait path of safety, serves to intensify the passion by denial. Thus the conflict may become more ardent : in fact, the power of the passion is not known save in resistance. There is, therefore, no escape but to endure the fire, and this

the angel tells the pilgrims who tread this last and painful way ; but those who enter may bend their ear and hear diviner songs than earth's low love had ever sung :

> ". . . Più non si va, se pria non morde,
> Anime sante, il foco : entrate in esso,
> Ed al cantar di là non siate sorde."
> (*Purg.* xxvii. 10–12.)

The angel promise is fulfilled : a voice melodious will bid them welcome in words more sweet than sweetest music : as a form like that of the Son of God cheered the children in the fire, so the song of heaven will encourage these souls who are purified and saved yet so as by fire.

One feature of this cornice is its intimate relationship with song : the penitents sing in the flame : they are encouraged by heavenly music ; and, fitly enough, those whom they meet are singers of earthly music ; and the conversation of the pilgrims is chiefly of song. Here Virgil and Dante and Statius meet the Provençal poets Guido Guinicelli and Arnaut Daniel. We are in the company of those poets who delighted in amatory verse. Did Dante feel that love-songs had a tendency to bring men into this fire ? Certainly, some among the Troubadour singers set fashions of love which brought morals into

doubt; and it seems to me significant that the only souls whom Dante meets in this circle expiating their fault should be those of love-poets. Guido Guinicelli was, according to Benvenuto, a man of uncontrolled passions—"Sicut autem erat ardentis ingenii et linguæ, ita ardentis luxuriæ"; [1] and the amatory poems of Arnaut Daniel are not free from moral reproach. "The tenor of one" (poem), says Mr Paget Toynbee, "sufficiently accounts for the place in Purgatory assigned to him by Dante." We must, however, be careful not to infer anything like wholesale viciousness of spirit among these singers. Dante belonged to the new school (*dolce stil nuovo*): he recognised Guido Guinicelli as his master. When he heard Guido tell his name, he acknowledged his indebtedness:

> "Quand' i' odo nomar sè stesso il padre
> Mio, e degli altri miei miglior, che mai
> Rime d' amore usar dolci e leggiadre."
> (*Purg.* xxvi. 97–100.)

But Dante and the Florentine school lifted love into regions of a noble purity: woman was treated with reverence. The Provençal poets often regarded marriage and love as mutually exclusive: they would have agreed with the

[1] Benvenuto, *Com.*, vol. iv. 121.

verdict of M. Finot, who expresses his views thus: "Les cours d'amour n'ont-elles pas decrété que l'amour et le mariage s'excluent comme l'eau et le feu?"[1] Where such views prevail vice cannot be far off, but the Florentine school rose above this low level. In their verse the married woman was replaced by the young maiden: the Provençal gallantry was rebuked: a new epoch began; a new ideal was created.[2] Dante, in placing these singers where he did, implied no censure of the elevated strain of this school of new poets, but did he not mean to hint that poetry which deals with this kind of love needs careful safeguarding? How easily its degradation may follow is exemplified in one sufferer here, Arnaut Daniel: he warns against practical dangers in the case of Guido Guinicelli. The poet-heart is susceptible; Dante knew that he himself was so (*Par.* v. 99), and his conviction of this danger expresses itself when he pictures these two poets suffering in the seventh terrace of the *Purgatorio*.

How near together in this passion are good and evil: with what cautious footsteps we need to walk along this road of love. "Take heed," says Reason our guide, "for love may be a foolish

[1] *...ugé et Problème des Sexes*, p. 449. Par Jean Finot; Paris, Félix Alcan.

[2] *Dan... Beatrice et la Poésie Amoureuse.* Par Rémy de Gourmont. Paris, 1908.

pastime, a base snare, a tormenting memory, or a sweet and pure inspiration." "What is love?" Keats asked, and answered his own question:

> "And what is love? It is a doll dress'd up,
> For idleness to cosset, nurse, and dandle."

Here it is seen as a foolish pastime.

Again, in a different mood, he gave a different description:

> "What can I do to drive away
> Remembrance from my eyes? For they have seen,
> Aye, an hour ago, my brilliant queen!
> . . . . . .
> Oh! the sweetness of the pain!
> Give me those lips again!
> Enough! Enough! It is enough for me
> To dream of thee."

Here it becomes a torment; but it may become worse, a base snare, for by reaction it may awaken a torturing hatred. "Lust hard by hate," wrote Milton wisely: (*cf.* 2 Sam. xiii. 15) so it proved with Amnon. But the same passion, when it flows in nobler and more natural channels, becomes an incentive to a pure and unselfish life; as King Arthur taught his knights:

> "To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
> To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
> And worship her by years of noble deeds,

Until they won her; for indeed I knew
Of no more subtle master under heaven
Than is the maiden passion for a maid.
Not only to keep down the base in man,
But teach high thought, and amiable words
And courtliness, and the desire of fame
And love of truth, and all that makes a man."

High love serves to kill the low. Dante's conception is therefore just, that only a fiery and heavenly love can burn out the baser. Love is stronger than death, and, if our faith be right, it is mightier than sin. God, who is love, is also a consuming fire. If it be fearful to fall into His hands, it is better to do so than to fall into any less faithful hands than His, who sits as a refiner and purifier of silver. His fire will try every work. There are worse things than pain, and the fire of God, if painful, carries a blessing. In the fire we may hear unspeakable music, the song of heaven is always sweet; and to the heart, weary of his own earthliness and longing for purity and righteousness, it is sweet to hear the benediction, which then comes like a song of triumph, "Blessed are the pure in heart."

With this music in our ears we may pass out of the final cornice of the *Purgatorio*.

But before we leave the ascent of this mountain

of discipline, let us look back upon the terraces and mark the sins which have been disciplined there.

The process of purifying has moved from the centre of man's being outward: its power has passed in ever-widening circles till it has grasped man's whole body. When humility has taken the place of pride, when pity has supplanted envy, when peace has banished anger, when energy has driven out indifference, when a nobler hunger and thirst have superseded greed and gluttony, when purified love has come into the soul in place of base passion, then the spirit and soul and body are presented blameless in the garden of the earthly paradise. Perfect self-mastery is now the portion of the pilgrim: the great animating principle of love is delivered from the powers which distorted, starved, or inflated it: it is restored to its pure, natural capacity: it is ready for worthy uses, and it is open to heavenly inspirations. It may now mount upward, for it has waited on the Lord and renewed its strength: the souls so disciplined shall mount up as eagles: the sense of fatigue will pass from them: they shall run and not be weary: they shall walk and not faint (Isa. xl. 31).

As they have learned the exercise of self-control they are masters of themselves and monarchs in

the realm of their own being: they may now be crowned, and as they are now fit to make the one true offering of themselves to God, they can be welcomed as kings and priests in the divine kingdom. Love now moves, natural and equable, within their well-disciplined souls, and love is ready to go forth in holy activity, aspiring after God and longing to be of service to man. Love is purified for sacrifice: heaven is opening above her head: graces and gifts divine are descending upon her. Laved in the streams of sweet forgetfulness and happy memory, she is ready to mount to the stars:

> "Rifatto si, come piante novelle
> Rinnovellate di novella fronda,
> Puro e disposto a salire alle stelle."
>
> (*Purg.* xxxiii. 143–145.)

LECTURE V

VICTORY OF LOVE

("PARADISO")

WHEN we enter the *Paradiso* we enter the realm in which love makes itself felt without let or hindrance. The atmosphere of the *Inferno* is law: that of the *Purgatorio* is hope: love breathes everywhere in the *Paradiso*. The word love is used nineteen times in the *Inferno*, and some fifty times in the *Purgatorio*: it rings like a joy-bell throughout the *Paradiso*: it is heard in every canto: seventy-seven times the word falls on our ears as we read this cantica.

The form of the ten heavens is due, of course, to the prevailing theories of astronomy: the poet takes the knowledge of his day and makes it serve the great purpose of his work.

The features of this realm which strike us are love, peace, and progress, accompanied by increasing light and perpetual song. The pilgrim still moves onward: now his advance is rapid and

easy, but it is a progress towards higher and nobler knowledge; and always the sense of peace is with him as he advances. The peace of the realm into which he has entered is all the more evident if we realise that movement increases in force and rapidity the higher the pilgrim goes.

From the heart of the heavens all love, all energy, all initiative, all light and music spring. The old image of the spreading circlets on the face of the waters, into which a stone has been cast, may be taken as giving roughly Dante's conception of the *Paradiso*. The centre of all—the highest heaven—glows with the eternal fire of love; but from it love's energy passes forth and becomes, in the next heaven, movement incalculably rapid: in the heaven next beneath it distributes itself in diverse forms, as one star differeth from another star in glory. We see love at rest, love in action, and love distributed into various fountains of capacity and centres of influence: love peaceful, energetic, diversified, fills these highest heavens.

This last highest Trinity of heavens may hold a symbolism of the working of the Godhead. God the Father as the central fount of love: God the Son is God manifest in energy: God the Spirit distributes to all, severally, as they need.

In all this picturing of divine things it is the spiritual value which is dominant. Thus move-

ment, intensely rapid in the *primum mobile* or first moving heaven, throbs all through the descending heavens; the rapidity slackens as we descend, but intensifies as we move upwards. No material or physical idea is here: it is but the expression, in imaginative form, of the idea that the nearer man is to God, the more does the energy of his love grow and produce greater activity in the power of service. The whole conception is that of natural objects and phenomena employed to express spiritual truth. We must bear this in mind. The *Paradiso* is felt to be tame and unattractive, because lacking in the incidents which meet us in the *Inferno* and in the *Purgatorio*. If we treat it as a picture of heavenly geography and of its physical order and occupations, it will seem wanting in arresting force. But we are not bound to treat it after the fashion of prosaic minds. The literalist can hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. The literal must fall away from us as we cross heaven's threshold. What is sown a natural body must be raised a spiritual body. The natural man discerneth not the things of the spirit: they may be foolishness to him. The pilgrim in this upper world must be the spiritual pilgrim: such an one will find his path one which shines more and more to the perfect day, and thrills more and more to the perfected love. As

spiritual pilgrims going on to perfection, we must enter upon the study of the *Paradiso*. Then its features will possess for us a true and attractive significance; for the story is that of the growing and ripening soul. With this in our minds we may follow the symbolism of the cantica.

There must be a complete self-surrender, if God is to fill the soul—let us note the symbolic suggestion of this at the outset.

The hour at which Dante enters the *Inferno* is sundown. In contrast he enters the *Purgatorio* at sunrise: a new day of hope has dawned upon his life: the hour is one of promise: the sun's sweet influence is in the ascendant. But he enters the *Paradiso* at mid-day, when the sun's full power is poured upon the earth: it is the hour of sacred, high, eternal noon: the sun is at the zenith, and all human occupations are suspended: the sound of industry is hushed: the busy folk are snatching this hour for repose: it is the hour of the cessation of human effort. It is, moreover, the vernal equinox, when the docile earth surrenders herself to the sweet seductions of the spring, and when the sun is coming forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber. It is the period of the cessation of effort and of the surrender of the soul to the influences of heaven.

This mystic feeling makes itself felt as the action

of the poem advances. The pilgrim surrenders himself to the heavenly forces which are around. Power falls upon him, and, without being aware of his own movement, he is mounting upward. This spiritual idea is common in experimental religious records. Progress in the Christian life is not through effort, but through all-embracing divine help : in God we live and move and have our being. Here is the force of the Apostolic injunction, "yield yourselves." As you have yielded yourselves to the power of worldly forces, so now yield yourselves to the power of the spiritual forces which pour around you. It is similar to that other precept, "Walk in the spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh" ; or again, "To be spiritually minded is life and peace." Thus, surrendering himself naturally to the throbbing powers of heaven, Dante mounts upward.

If the *Purgatorio* shows us the discipline of the will, the *Paradiso* reveals the satisfaction of the heart. Painful effort ceases : no more need the weary feet tread the pilgrim's way : no more do the burdens of past faults weigh heavy on the soul : no longer does every step seem to be no gain, but only a reproach of time wasted in wandering :

> "Com' uom che torna alla perduta strada,
> Che infino ad essa gli par ire in vano."
>
> (*Purg.* i. 119, 120.)

Now movement is painless and upward. So gentle and yet so rapid is the movement that the poet feels no sense of motion, so swift that no outward measure of its speed is possible: thus, amid breathless movement, there is a sense of rest, and yet it is not the rest of lethargy, when, in quick succession, convictions of rapid upward flight break upon the soul.

The rest of heaven is not stagnation: the higher the soul rises the swifter are the movements in which it is involved. This is no heaven of the indolent, the spirits are caught in the great circling stream of the divine energy, which grows swifter and swifter as it approaches the central fire of God. The ignoble heaven of popular thought is not the heaven of Dante; slackness, inertness, a fond desire of sloth, find no place in his conception: he is much nearer to the conception of the Gospel, in which the kingdom of heaven is a field of labour, and the glory of God is that of the ceaseless worker. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," was the utterance of Christ. The nearer to God the greater the working energy, is the thought of Dante.

Viewed from the literal standpoint, the *Paradiso* is an imaginative picture of the splendour—and, perhaps we ought to add, the joys—of heaven, but as a spiritual conception it sets forth in

picturesque form the stages and conditions of the soul's advance Godward; in fact, it embodies and unfolds some final experiences of the Christian pilgrim's progress. If we are to seekt he true message of the *Paradiso*, we must interpret it from the spiritual standpoint. We need, however, to keep before us what we may call the stage setting of the spiritual drama; though the message of the moving act, not the scenery, conveys the true meaning. The stage and scenery, however, are splendid of their kind. The pilgrim moves upwards, leaving the earthly paradise behind. Without being sensibly aware of it, he is passing through great belts of air and fire: he then moves successively through the planets of the Ptolemaic system—the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn; higher still in his journey he reaches the region of the fixed stars, the last realm in which the divine energy reveals itself in form: then, "Sun, moon, and stars forgot," upward he flies and enters the great circle in which formless divine energy sweeps with such intense rapidity that the very idea of speed is annihilated, and the pilgrim steps into the central realm of eternal rest. The peace and stability of the universe is here in the very presence of God, whose fire is the fire of love. He is, therefore, both the security of peace and the source of the

energising power of every realm, from the centre to the most distant circumference of his empire—the universe.

Among other features of the *Divine Comedy* we must notice, I think, the occasional and unexpected modernism of some of the poet's conceptions. He tells us that when he looked steadfastly at the sun he saw it going forth with ceaseless industry, flames like sparks from molten iron (*Par.* i. 54–62) : and in a later canto he takes us to the circle where motion—which has been growing in rapidity with every advance towards the central heaven—attains its maximum in the embrace therefore of the realm of unchangeable peace (*Par.* xxiv. 131, 132) : the compact stability of the most changeless things we know is attained through the measureless rapidity of constituent parts. The atom, which was thought to defy division, is found to be a little system of swiftly revolving molecules : its quiet strength is sustained by the intensity of movement, which it conceals. The central peace of all is not allied with indolent quietude : the nearer to God the deeper the peace, and also the greater the necessity of eager activity.

The realm is one of progress.

The idea of continued progress in the *Paradiso* receives illustration as we note how the stages of

mediæval learning are incorporated in the imagery. The Ptolemaic system of astronomy is made to represent the progress of learning. The first three planets—the Moon, Mercury, and Venus—represent the Trivium, *i.e.* Grammar, Dialectics, and Rhetoric respectively; the next four planets represent the Quadrivium, *i.e.* Arithmetic, Music, Geometry, and Astrology: three heavens lie beyond, and they stand for the three great revelations of God in Natural Science, in Moral Science, and finally in Theology. Our interpretation, however, must avoid mechanical literalism. The significance of the planets thus brought into harmony with the curriculum of education is simply this: that the progress through the heavens is, like the pursuit of the stages of study, educational; the soul, with the mind, must be exercised in the powers of the Graces. As the student must become well skilled in grammar and dialectics and rhetoric, so must the soul be apt in faith, hope, and charity. Again, as the Quadrivium must follow the Trivium, so must the great cardinal virtues of life appear as products of the Graces. The virtues are not to be learned by practice or discipline, as in the *Purgatorio*: they must be effluent from graces already stored in the soul: they must come as from a centre of spiritual force, not as an acquired habit, but as in harmony with

the governing impulses of the soul. But when these graces and virtues are thus possessed, more lies beyond. Then the powers of perception and apprehension are enlarged: the spirit can discern God in Nature, God in moral order, God in the very soul itself. The highest capacity reached is the theological, the final knowledge of God, not through any medium, like that of natural or moral order, but in direct spiritual vision.

It is, therefore, not into a fixed and stereotyped heaven that the pilgrim is introduced in the *Paradiso*: it is into a realm of spiritual progress: it is into a realm of spiritual order: its laws are different from the laws of lower regions:

> "And much is lawful there which here exceeds
> our power." (C. i. 55.)

But its laws are truly laws: it is no chaotic or anarchical heaven: its habitations express accurately the spiritual qualities of souls in various stages of progress. It is a region through which the pilgrim may go, learning and growing at every stage, learning because growing, and growing by learning: for experience and capacity increase by interaction. We must drop our earthly standards of measurement in this world of progress. "Here" and "there" and "now" and "when" are notions of earth, and must be forgotten in the *Paradiso*.

The souls are linked with various planets, which betoken degrees of spiritual capacity, yet all have their abode in the Mystic Rose. But we must conceive of these things apart from ideas of time and place: the advance is one, not of movement, but of spiritual growth. Place is not this planet or that, but peace and light in the great company of souls who dwell in the presence of God. It is in this sense that we must understand and measure the progress of the soul in the *Paradiso*.

It is, then, a spiritual progress which is exhibited in the *Paradiso*. Whatever attempt Dante made to draw pictures of heaven, spiritual ideas were almost always uppermost in his mind. The interest which he may have felt in a material heaven is subordinate to his ethical conceptions: the progress of the soul towards the vision and presence of God is more than all poetical picturings.

Dante, in his own characteristic fashion, makes us realise that heaven is no place of eternal fixedness. For mortals entering it the prospect is one of progress and variety: the step across its threshold does not usher us at once into the scenes of its fullest or final delight: it only introduces the pilgrim to a journey through realms of growing light, music, and movement. Happiness is indeed the portion of its inhabitants,

but the shadow of earth stretches far beyond the threshold. The marks and consequences of human frailty are seen to reach through three of heaven's mansions, the penumbra of the earth falls across the heavens of the Moon, Mercury, and Venus: lack of completeness in spiritual grasp while on earth brings this dimming of heaven's light. The Christian life has at its root the three graces of Faith, Hope, and Charity. Instability in Christian purpose means weakness in faith: personal ambition blending with noble devotion implies lack of firm grasp upon Christian hope: undue earthliness in affection may impair the bright purity of love. So earth's shadow falls over the appointed lot of those who betrayed such weaknesses. Those who showed instability in high purpose find their fitting lot in the inconstant Moon: those in whom the alloy of personal ambition mingled with great and noble desires have their portion assigned them in Mercury: those in whom love betrayed some taint of earthliness find their place in Venus. Over these three heavens the faint earth shadow rests.

But no spirit is confined to these lower heavens. The pilgrim journeying Godward takes his way through them, but he must pass through the heavens in which the cardinal virtues are strong. Prudence shines in the Sun: Fortitude assumes

its warlike mantle in Mars: Justice marks the heaven of Jupiter: while in Saturn, Self-control or Temperance sets the spirit free for that contemplation, which lifts the soul higher and nearer God.

Three heavens lie beyond, but to reach these the soul must ascend by the ladder of gold, which rises upward till it reaches the last heaven of final rest.

Thus in the structure, as it were, of the *Paradiso* we are compelled to notice the idea of advance. Heaven is no place of stagnation: all things and all souls are in movement, and whoever enters must go forward and upward. He passes through region after region—finding light growing around him in intensity, movement growing more rapid, and music more sweet the higher he ascends and the nearer he approaches the ineffable glory. Thus through the heaven, as through the hell and the purgatory, the way of the pilgrim is an advance. But it is more, he himself is changed, as the Apostle said, it is an advance from "glory to glory." Strange and wonderful experiences are his as, like a wanderer, he is drawing near to his home. The various spheres through which he passes possess their characteristic picturesqueness, beauty, and suggestiveness, but the chief interest is centred in the spiritual conditions

which these various abodes of the blessed are meant to set forth.

It is not my purpose to enter upon any critical account of the ten heavens of the *Paradiso*. It is enough for our aim to keep in mind the general picture which Dante gives us. His Paradise of ten heavens is divided into a threefold division. Three planets (the Moon being accounted one), three planets—the Moon, Mercury, and Venus—belong to the first division. Over these the shadow of the earth lies. Four planets (the Sun being accounted as one), four planets—the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn—form the second division. The remaining heavens, three in number, are the Starry Heaven, the Heaven of Initial Movement, and the Heaven of Peace. Through these the golden stairway mounts. Peace presides over the souls of all within the borders of Paradise, for though they appear now in one realm, now in another of Paradise, yet the dwelling-place of all is in the highest heaven, where all is peace, because love, burning love, is centred there. There is no need of mental questioning, for there all is light: there is no need of heart trouble, for all is love: there is no disturbance of soul, for all is peace. Not only do the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest, but all doubt, dismay, and discord pass away from harmonised

souls, who, in their final vision, wake up after God's likeness and are satisfied with it.

The heavens, while serving to illustrate special virtues or qualities, are linked together in an orderly spiritual sequence.

The soul in heaven must begin with the graces. In our human order we are often led to think of the virtues as qualities which may be acquired by vigilance and self-discipline, and which, being acquired, still lack the graces which the power of God may supply. We can become prudent, brave, just, and temperate; but faith, hope, and charity must be bestowed from on high: they are the spiritual aftermath of the harvest of diligent endeavour. But in heaven the order is reversed: our virtues must be the outcome of graces, and the graces will again crown the acquisition of virtue. The first three heavens tell us that faith, hope, and charity must fill the soul before prudence, fortitude, justice, and temperance can be ours in their full volitional energy. And is it a mere fancy which sees in the last three heavens the perfecting of the graces after the soul has been duly furnished with the virtues?

At any rate, the heavens are progressive: they illustrate not only fitting habitations of souls endowed with some special qualities, but stages also in the upward progress of the soul.

It has been said that Dante in the *Paradiso* is a mediævalist. We may admit that we meet with discourses in this cantica which must seem tedious and inconclusive to us. The strange mixing—muddling it appears to our minds—of arguments metaphysical with facts from the physical world repels our interest. The prolonged discourse on the spots on the Moon (C. ii.) can only have an antiquarian interest. The argument on behalf of the sanctity of Imperial power is mingled with puerile exegesis. The influence of mediæval thought and method is evident. It was inevitable that this should be the case. Dante is the child of his age; and, as is natural, he shows the influence of mediæval thought most strongly when he deals with theological or metaphysical subjects. Then his imagination is not wholly free, and he speaks with the voice of the schools. We meet, therefore, the mediæval tone in those discourses in the *Paradiso* in which the poet represents himself as being examined on the questions of faith, hope, and charity. But if the stamp of mediævalism is clearly discernible in these conversations, Dante knows when to smile at scholastic conceits, and can on occasion hold his own judgment against the most venerated names. He differs with Aquinas on two matters—on confession and on the Papal power. On confession

he takes the earlier and more ethical view: on the Papal power he takes the view of the Ghibelline: he lays down principles which were advocated later by Marsiglio of Padua in his work *Defensor Pacis*. He could never accept the idea advocated by Aquinas that the power of the Empire had been absorbed in or united with that of the Church. In Aquinas' view the Church could admit no rival to herself in the secular state. In Dante's view the Imperial power was heaven-born and consecrate. Dante is no slavish follower of the great doctors from whom he learned and whom he reverenced.

Dante early in this cantica sets forth the relation between eternal truth and its human form of expression. He shows keen perception of the difference between formal and absolute truth: he shows, however, his common-sense appreciation of the practical values of earthly forms, even though they cannot be claimed as final expressions of truth. We are taught that now the eternal divine truth may link itself with inadequate human expressions of it. As he moves upward Dante gazes at the Sun: he sees into the heart of it: sparkles of flame are showered forth from it, as close packed sparks rush from iron glowing in the forge. With the increasing outrush of power, daylight seems doubled. From the Sun he turns to gaze now upon Beatrice, whose eyes are fixed

with rapt intensity upon the Sun. Then a new and strangely exalting sensation came to him: he had the feeling of being transfigured. He felt divinely strong, invigorated with power as of a god, such a sense of exalted capacity and power of godlikeness was his. Whether any bodily change was wrought in him he knew not: he could not tell whether any outward signs accompanied this inward conviction of sudden and glorious difference. The love, by whose effluence of light he was transfigured, alone could tell what happenings accompanied his experience.

His experience is very simple and suggestive: there is first a direct look at the Sun, when light seems doubled: there is then a look at Beatrice, and he feels a sense of personal change to a godlike energy.

Beatrice, let us say, as the commentators do, stands for Theology: theology gives formal expression to divine truths: but these truths in their ultimate verity must always transcend formal expression. Dante, in common with all thinking theologians, holds this view. What he is able to tell is only a feeble and halting recollection of all he saw. When "within that heaven which most this light receives" he beheld things

"... which to repeat
Nor knows, nor can, who from above descends;

and this for the reason that in beholding the beatific vision, intellect fails to grasp all that is made manifest, and memory fails to retain it.

> "Our intellect ingulphs itself so far
> That after it the memory cannot go."
> (*Par.* i. 5–9.)

Divine truth transcends formal expression; though philosophically inadequate, yet the expression of it may nevertheless be the means of helping the soul of man into the experience of spiritual harmony with God: and, indeed, because more suited to man's earthly capacity, formal theology may possess this power in a degree which no formless divine truth could convey. The power to grasp eternal truth in its ultimate reality is beyond man. He can gaze into the heart of the great light: he can feel it to be a light which grows in intensity and power, but it transcends his capacity: it is vain to hope to grasp it: its very vastness eludes him: its splendour of light blinds him: its very magnificence deprives him of the joy of consciously apprehending it and of personally embracing it. Hence, while realising the transcendent light of naked and unembodied truth, man needs and must use the more limited but sweeter, sweeter because more familiar, embodiment of truth, which, though less splendid and

even liable to anthropomorphic limitations, is more accessible and practically more useful to the soul of man. Beatrice, then, stands for theological truth made comprehensible to man, and so capable of working in and for man that great readjustment of his being which prepares him for further heavenly experiences.

This is a principle constantly recognised and affirmed: we find it in one form or another admitted by the greater spirits among men. In the interests indeed of what is called higher thought, there is sometimes shown a disdain of all dogmatic form. This is quite intelligible, seeing how often dogmas have been exploited by unintelligent theologians, and how often theories have been enforced in a perverse and unsympathetic spirit. Dante keeps to the same path in this matter: he recognises that divine truth must transcend human expression, and he also realises the value of human forms: they may help upward the soul which looks heavenward.

Dante implies that he drew his power to mount from Beatrice: Beatrice looked steadfastly towards the eternal spheres: Dante's gaze was fixed on Beatrice. If Beatrice stands for theology, theology, to be powerful, must direct its gaze aright: it is not a skilful system of dogmatics which will avail; its whole outlook must be Godward: it

must steadfastly look towards the central love, otherwise its virtue departs from it: Beatrice cannot help Dante upward except Beatrice look to heaven.

Like Glaucus, who, having tasted the herb which revived the fish's life, was transformed into a god of the sea, so was Dante transformed by the light—not which came from the eyes of Beatrice, but the divine light reflected in her eyes as she gazed heavenward. With this transformation Dante knew not whether he was in the body or out of it: so absorbed was he by new influence that former sensations of self-consciousness were suspended. The power which wrought this was not that of Beatrice, it came from the Supreme Fountain of all power: it was a manifestation of that power which to Dante was the eternal central power: it was the love which governs heaven, which lifted him with its light.

Elsewhere love holds high place in the experiences of the *Paradiso*. As it was love which built the *Inferno*: as it is the action of love, now perverted, slackened, or coarsened, which is illustrated in the *Purgatorio*: so it is love as an inspiring, uplifting power, bestowing on all things their true worth and force, which meets us on the threshold of the *Paradiso*. Human forms of truth help us to grasp truth greater than themselves:

for even as we grasp the form we are sensible that what we reach must transcend all earthly expression of it. It does so in truth, but, nevertheless, it has been brought more within our grasp by coming to us through the human medium. Truth, like the Lord of truth, must be incarnate for us to grasp it; but as the Christ was said by the creed to be inferior to the Father as regards His manhood, though equal to the Father as regards His Godhead, so also truth as it comes to us is inferior to all divine thought as regards its earthly form, but equal to the divine thought as regards its heavenly significance. The human expression of truth is but the medium: like a mirror, it has power of reflection, but the power of perfect reflection depends upon the quality and perfection of the instrument. In Christ, according to the Apostle, there dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. "He that hath seen me," said Christ, "hath seen the Father." But with our poor, limited theological instruments, defective and damaged, we cannot expect the reflection to be perfect. It is only as the mirror is turned to catch the rays of divine light that it can reflect anything: Beatrice must look to the Sun, if her eyes are to reflect heaven's light. Our theological dogmas must be interpenetrated with divine feeling and fitness. Doctrines are dead

things unless they bring us into contact with divine power. As in God we live, and move, and have our being; so human teachings only live as they live unto God, for all alike live only unto Him.

But we must leave this matter, and note the shadow of the *Paradiso*. The dark cone of earth's shadow fines down to its last point in the heaven of Venus. The shadow is the influence of the earthly passion which marred the love of those whose heaven is here. The personages whom we find here have awakened some comment. Cunizza da Romano, sister of Azzolino the tyrant, whose character was dark-stained by her licentious conduct, and Rahab the harlot, are in this heaven. The startling fact is that these two women, whose lives, by all admission, were smirched with sin, are placed by Dante, not with the voluptuous circle in the *Inferno*, with Dido and Semiramis and the unhappy Paolo and Francesca, but in this third heaven, less darkened by earth's shadow than either the Moon or Mercury. When we think of poor women, whose fall, if fall it were, was due to force, placed lower down than these two women who sold their virtue of their own free choice, we are staggered, and we ask, has Dante lost the calm spirit of just judgment? Surely, as far as faults are concerned, the faults

of Cunizza and Rahab are far darker than those of Piccarda and Costanza.

But let us recall the fact that the question with Dante in the *Paradiso* is not to point out the penalty of sin ; the burden of actual sin has no place or power in Paradise. Hell may weigh sins, but Paradise does not. The souls we meet in the heavens were those who would acknowledge on earth their sins, but, however much the sins of life lay heavy on their souls when below, now in heaven the sense of burden has wholly passed away : these souls have doubtless drunk of Lethe, and have entered into the blessedness of those who can forget. The suggestion made by many is that these souls have passed through the period of repentance : they have tasted forgiveness, and they are entitled to believe that their sins have been put away. Thus we are told by some that Cunizza da Romano spent her later years in penitence and kindly ministry to the needy. All this may be true, and Dante may have realised it and appreciated the significance of such a close to a life whose early years were deeply stained. But I am inclined to see in Dante's treatment of this matter another meaning. Dante, as we have seen, shows with inexorable sternness the consequences of wrong-doing : of this unswerving severity the lot of Paolo and Francesca is the

pathetic proof; but in his general estimate of human faults, this weakness of the flesh is treated by him as less hateful than others. Shall I say that he treats this fault with an almost gentle hand? I can hardly say this in presence of the fact I have cited; but I think I am right in saying that he feels less repugnance to this fault than to those which betray meanness, cruelty, cunning, fraud, or treachery: his heart, moreover, is more with the sinner than with the hypocrite: he wishes to show that faults like these may coexist with bright, amiable, and attractive yet magnanimous qualities. Are we wrong in calling attention to the fact that there is often found more sweetness and lovableness, more singleness and simplicity of soul among such sinners than among the pretentious religionists who are careful to keep within the conventional borders of social order? I think Dante remembered Him who said: "The publicans and harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you." If we read the context and hear how he breaks forth indignantly against the corruptions, defalcations, and greed of Church authorities, we shall the less wonder that he took a fierce gladness in placing Cunizza and Rahab in this heaven shadowed with the faint shadow of these earthly faults. He realises—does he not?—that his action may cause some dismay or

surprise to the commonplace or conventional mind. He pictures Cunizza free from the heavy memories and self-reproaches of the past. She cries :

> "Gladly do I pardon to myself
> The cause of this my lot, and it grieves me not,
> Which would haply seem hard saying to your vulgar."
> (See *Par.* ix. 32–36.)

Dante, in short, as it seems to me, had not only knowledge of the Old and New Testaments, which were to him "the Word divine" (*Par.* xxiv. 99), but he had drank deeply into the spirit of the Evangel : he had read of the gracious love which received the Magdalen, which cast a protecting shield over the woman taken in adultery, and which sought to win the tarnished woman of Samaria. Is it surprising, then, that he should rejoice to place in his heaven the thrice-married Cunizza and the harlot Rahab ? He could plead the Scripture record of faith for the right of Rahab to be there, and the example of the woman of Samaria for his treatment of Cunizza. No one who has entered into the spirit of Dante will accuse him of slackness in dealing with this sad fault ; but, as we recognise the stern measure he dealt out to it in the *Inferno*, we ought to recognise the loving tenderness with which he rejoiced over the fallen whom his divine Master had welcomed to His side.

It is, moreover, in this heaven of Venus that we hear the philosophical discussion on inborn qualities and gifts : its conclusion is that the best natures are sometimes turned aside by the chances of their lot :

> "Evermore nature, if it fortune find
> Discordant to it, like each other seed
> Out of its region, maketh evil thrift."
> (*Par.* viii. 139–141.)

There are always to be found poor souls whom we are tempted to condemn with harshness, but who, in popular language, may be more sinned against than sinning : to know all is, according to the French proverb, to forgive all. One there was who said to the woman weeping at his feet, "Neither do I condemn thee : go and sin no more." Remembering all this, and remembering the chivalry of heart which Dante bore to womanhood, I am not surprised that he finds in his heaven room for these two fallen ones, types of those to whom the Lord Christ showed such ready forgiveness and compassion.

Prudence is the virtue with which the spirits in the fourth heaven are expected to be adorned. Appropriately the solid sanity which marked Dante's wide sympathy finds expression in this heaven of the Sun. It is the heaven consecrated to the theologians. In the choice of the Sun as the

special haunt of the theologian, Dante shows us his lofty ideal of theology. Theology, the science of the knowledge of God, is to him the queen of all sciences. We shall not dispute the position. If to know God is everlasting life, then the science which leads to this knowledge must hold a place high above all other kinds of knowledge. From the standpoint of this ideal, theology may challenge every science.

But the ideal is one thing: the real is, alas! another. Even in Apostolic days there were theological debates, which St Paul described as disputes about words: and the Apostle showed a wise intolerance of empty discussion. The truth is that theology in endeavouring to become a science became a speculative philosophy: in endeavouring to be logical it became rationalistic: in endeavouring to satisfy the logic of the mind it forgot the syllogisms of the heart. It starved the soul in trying to appease the reason. It ceased to be a science, for in secluding itself within the chamber of premises and conclusions it silenced the capacities by which alone God can be known. In trying to describe God it deprived the soul of the power to receive Him. In the excursions of logical speculation it forgot that by love alone God, who is love, can be known. The clear-visioned statements of Apostles were too

often lost sight of by scholastic teachers, who certainly did not remember that St John had said, "He that loveth not knoweth not God," and that St Paul had prayed that his flock might be rooted and grounded in love, that so they might comprehend the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

Now Dante's breadth and sanity enable him to reverence ideal theology, and, at the same time, to mark the weaknesses which attach to the human attempts to give it expression. The form given to divine truth by human teachers had its value: truth absolute might be recognised by man as ideally and eternally existent, but it could not, unless translated into some form intelligible to men, be operative in helping the soul upward. This he taught early in his *Paradiso*, as we have seen. The divine light must be reflected in the eyes of Beatrice, *i.e.* interpreted in human form.

But the interpretations given by men are many. In his day Thomas Aquinas, Albertus Magnus, Peter Lombard, Bonaventura, Anselm, Hugh of St Victor were leaders of theological thought. Differences marked their teaching: the law of charity was not always strong enough to control the passion of controversy: great teachers were often swift to search out heresy in their rivals:

men of earnest convictions would persecute intellectual opponents unto death. Dante, with a sublime indifference to controversial bitterness, and deaf even to cries of heresy, draws together in the heaven of the Sun the teachers of rival schools. Those who believed that knowledge led the way to love, move in the same heaven with those who taught that love opened the door to knowledge.

He selects twelve, who form a starry circle around himself and Beatrice: beyond this another starry circle is formed, and even beyond this a third circle twinkles and brightens. The nearer circle represents theologians of what was called the Dominican type of theology: the next circle represents the theologian of the Franciscan type. The keynote of the inner or first circle is knowledge: the keynote of the circle encompassing it is love: these star-like theologians shine bright even against the brightness of the Sun. Thus men differing in gift and in type of teaching are made one in the region of wider and clearer heavenly light. Dante measures them, not by their differences nor by their mistakes, but by the something good or true which they communicated to their fellow-men. He values each for what he was, and for what of good he did. He was an admirer of Aquinas: he drew many of his theo-

logical conceptions from his writings, but he could recognise the worth and value of other teachers also. He could not share the party spirit which exalted one teacher over another: he could be a disciple of any thinker who had some truth to teach, but he would not be brought in bondage of any: he could be a learner from any teacher: he would refuse to be a partisan. He realised the width of riches of the Church's inheritance: like a true disciple of St Paul, he refused to say, "I am of Paul, or I am of Apollos, or I am of St Thomas Aquinas, or I am of Bonaventura." All teachers were his: this was his lawful inheritance: all were his, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or St Dominic, or St Francis (1 Cor. iii.). Here is the token of that intellectual and spiritual breadth which welcomed help from all quarters or from all messengers of truth.

But this is not all: Dante, keen logician as he is, lover of subtle argument, courageous to attack difficult problems, is, nevertheless, alive to practical values. It is not without meaning that he introduces Solomon among the teachers to whom knowledge was the gateway of love. In the discussion which he introduces respecting Solomon, he calls attention to the actual purpose of knowledge and wisdom: its value is not speculative, or to satisfy the pride of curiosity,

it is for service, for the fulfilment of assigned function. Such is seen in the case of Solomon :

"Clearly he was a king who asked for wisdom,
That he might be sufficiently a king ;
'Twas not to know the number in which are
The motors here above, or if *necesse*
With a contingent e'er *necesse* make,
Non si est dare primum motum esse,
Or if in semicircle can be made
Triangle so that it have no right angle."
(*Par.* xiii. 95–102.)

And thence the lesson of charitable hesitancy in judgment is drawn. We cannot judge except as we know the end and purpose of things : hence judgment should not be hasty, it should be slow of foot :

". . . lead shall this be always to thy feet,
To make thee like a weary man, move slowly
Both to the 'Yes' and 'No' thou seest not ;
For very low among the fools is he
Who affirms without distinction, or denies,
As well in one as in the other case ;
Because it happens that full often bends
Current opinion in the false direction,
And then the feelings bind the intellect."
(*Par.* xiii. 112–120.)

The full strength of this large outlook of Dante is not realised unless we note that in the

Dominic circle Sigieri is found beside Thomas Aquinas: and Joachim of Flora beside St Bonaventura. Sigieri joined in the disputes which took place in Paris: he was opposed to the Dominican claims in the matter: Thomas Aquinas in 1260 entered the lists against him, and sought publicly to refute him. The theology of Joachim of Flora was distasteful to Bonaventura: he regarded his followers as heretics. Dante, alive to the good in each, places Sigieri next to Thomas Aquinas' left hand: and Joachim next to Bonaventura.

Who are we to judge or to charge too readily with heresy men who are trying each in their way to let God's light pass out through them to the world? The Church, alas! has too often been forward to quench the smoking flax and to crush the bruised reed: so doing she has lost music and light. It is not for us to judge before the harvest, says Dante, with remembrance of Christ's parable, to count

> "The corn in field or ever it be ripe.
> For I have seen all winter long the thorn
> First show itself intractable and fierce,
> And after bear the rose upon its top."
>
> (*Par.* xiii. 132–135.)

But as many that are last may be first, so also the first may be last.

"And I have seen a ship direct and swift
Run o'er the sea throughout its course entire,
To perish at the harbour's mouth at last."
(*Par.* xiii. 136–138.)

Thus, as the great theologians are seen splendid in the heaven of the Sun, the warning against harsh and hasty judgments is given by Dante. Whether men followed the school of St Francis or St Dominic, they might find their way to heaven. But yet, "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," and let none venture to take the final judgment into his hands; for beyond the recognised schools bright lights may be found. Outside the second circle the limits of another, wider and greater, were seen:

"And lo! all round about of equal brightness
Arose a lustre over what was there,
Like an horizon that is clearing up.
And as at rise of early eve begin
Along the welkin new appearances,
So that the sight seems real and unreal,
It seemed to me that new subsistences
Began there to be seen, and make a circle
Outside the other two circumferences.
O very sparkling of the Holy Spirit,
How sudden and incandescent it became
Unto mine eyes, that vanquished bore it not."
(*Par.* xiv. 67–78.)

This third circle has given rise to many questions—what does it signify? Does it celebrate some other school of thought? If so, what school? Dr Carroll suggests that the circle embraces the followers of Joachim. But, if so, Joachim, who appears in the earlier circle, would be separated from his followers. Is not the third circle the hint of some further light of truth which may be expected as the great order of God's providence moves forward? The lights of the theological firmament are not exhausted by the companies gathered in the first two circles. God has other light to break forth for men, even as Christ has sheep "not of this fold." This third circle is a great figurative mode of expressing faith in the dawning of light, more light upon mankind. Christ is the light of the world; but the full glory of that light is only perceived as ages of spiritual teaching open men's eyes to see. We need not believe that any set of men were empowered to lock the gate of knowledge and to throw away the key. As long as the soul can aspire, the conscience speak, the mind think, and the heart feel, so long will there be theologians in the world; for men will always seek to give expression to their religious consciousness, till that day comes when we shall know even as we are known, and when, as Dante hoped, fervent love

would clear the vision, and perfection absolute would be acquired (*Par.* xiii. 79–81).

Passing to the next heaven we reach the red planet Mars; the sign of the cross is on it, and on the cross gleams the form of Christ. It is the heaven of those who were soldiers of the cross, faithful unto death. Fortitude is needed here. We are not now bidden to behold the teachers and doctors. Here are the heroes of the faith. Here the voice cries for courage, and martial music calls to the heart, "Arise and conquer." Here the sacrificial spirit is needed; and, fitly, as the pilgrim enters this heaven which glowed with a hue more ruddy than its wont, the ardour of sacrifice passes into his soul: he is ready to take up the cross, yes, or to suffer the cross and follow Christ. Love, the love which can endure pain and loss, thrills him with heroic enthusiasm: his heart speaks the language of loving devotion; the offering of his whole heart he makes

> "In that dialect
> Which is the same in all."
>
> (*Par.* xiv. 88.)

The joy of sacrifice is his: the love of earthly or lower things seems hopelessly unworthy:

"'Tis well that without end he should lament,
Who for the love of thing that doth not last
Eternally despoils him of that love!"
(*Par.* xv. 10–12.)

In this heaven, besides Cacciaguida his kinsman, Joshua, Judas Maccabæus, Charlemagne, and Godfrey de Bouillon find place. Love may be fostered by knowledge, and sacred theology may therefore help the souls of men to the fuller apprehension of divine love; but, if love is to grow vigorous, it must learn exercise through courage: it must share the sacrificial spirit of the cross. Its quality grows purer in this experience. "Can the Haoma," asked Zarathustra, "can the Haoma that has been touched by the corpse of a dead dog or the corpse of a dead man be made clean again?" Ahura Mazda answered: "It can, O Holy Zarathustra, if it has been strained for the sacrifice: no corpse that has been brought unto it makes corruption or death enter into it." Similarly, he that dies with Christ gains life beyond the power of corruption: for "he that is dead is freed from sin." Love takes on new lustre and new life-power in the heaven of the Heroes of the Cross. In olden days these heroes were the martyrs like St Stephen, Polycarp, St Cyprian: in modern days they are the missionary martyrs of the cross,

Williams, Livingstone and Moffat, Bishops Selwyn and Hannington.

If the fourth heaven shows us love enlarged to the toleration of differences and the welcome of spiritual help from all quarters, the fifth heaven sounds the call to courageous service, inspired by Him who transfigured suffering with the glory which shone from His cross.

But love, as an impelling force, needs the curb of justice. Therefore, in the sixth heaven the pilgrim gains from the eagle-light of those who showed this great virtue, precious in all, invaluable in rulers. Here the great tide of political interest might well carry us away. Dante, firm in his faith that the Emperor held, no less than the Pope, a consecrated office, naturally passes into meditations and discussions respecting the relation of civil and ecclesiastical responsibility. It is the heaven of Jupiter—fit emblem of the dwelling of those who were kings among men. The spirits there, like stars, group themselves in the form of an eagle, and from the eagle's mouth comes the voice of "the associated spirits," as Mr Tozer calls them. Righteousness is in rulers the highest wisdom, and true love, which draws all virtues into itself, must absorb this one. Hence Dante finds occasion to denounce "the unjust or selfish or thoughtless rule which has

brought so many evils in its train." To follow this, however, would lead us from our true path now.

But, as we accompany the pilgrim through this heaven, we meet once more with indications of Dante's courageous sense of right. Here, in company with David, Hezekiah, Constantine, we find two pagan souls, Trajan and Ripheus. Commentators are naturally inclined to inquire the reason for thus placing high in heaven, heathen who might more appropriately have found place in the limbo of the *Inferno*.

It is easy, of course, to point out that some other characters might have been selected; but it is only a sign of pitiful literalism to say with one commentator, "This is a fiction of the author; for there is no proof that Ripheus the Trojan is saved." Of course not: the remark applies to thousands of others; it is a criticism which shows some slumberfulness on the critic's part. There is no certain authority behind the judgment of Dante respecting the various persons he introduces; it is possible that many whom he thrust into the *Inferno* have their place in heaven. To enter upon such a question as this is to challenge the right of the poet to his own imagination: to say that he might have found heathen worthier of this place in heaven is to

enter upon an investigation too large to be profitable. Does it not lie on the face of the matter that here again Dante desires to affirm his belief that many are first who shall be last, and the last first? Is he not bidding us to recall the saying of Christ that some may come from the East and the West and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, while the children of the kingdom shall be cast out? He read the touching tale of Trajan's charity to the widow: he remembered how his guide and master Virgil had spoken of Ripheus as the most just among the Trojans: he felt that such were spirits "naturally Christian," and he boldly placed them in the heaven, firmly convinced that to such souls the revelation of Christ's love had been somewhere disclosed.

The explanations given need not detain us. It is the spirit of Dante on this matter which interests us; and in his joy over the depths of divine grace we feel the reaching out of his heart in charity to all. Love is the keynote of the *Divina Commedia*, as it is the central force in Dante's character. The pressure of love's joy in Dante's heart finds utterance at this moment in one of his most beautiful images. The eagle speaks sweet words of divine grace: it far surpasses poor human thought: in the erring world who would believe that Ripheus the Trojan would find place among these holy

lights: nay, even Ripheus, now with enlarged views of things divine, cannot fathom the deeps of God's dear love. The words are sweet as the lark's song, splendid, satisfying. There follows the image which has evoked such widespread admiration:

> "Like as a lark that in the air expatiates,
> First singing and then silent with content
> Of the last sweetness that doth satisfy her,
> Such seemed to me the image of the imprint
> Of that eternal pleasure, by whose will
> Doth everything become the thing it is."
> (*Par.* xx. 73–78.)

To mount to the highest realms of heaven, the pilgrim must climb the golden ladder. This ladder rises from the heaven of Self-control. Contemplation takes the place of action. The soul, disciplined to self-control, is now in perfect self-mastery, made ready for a further movement upward. The sphere of action, with its distracting claims, is left behind: the mind once more is fixed on things above: not even the innocent and needful duties of theologian or warrior or ruler find place here. "Ab exterioribus ad interiora," said St Bernard; and again, "ab interioribus ad superiora." We are in the truly mystical belt of the Paradise. The transition is through the Fixed Stars and the *Primum Mobile*

to the Empyrean—to the central divine abode of love. The pilgrim sees the Celestial Rose, the great company of those whose names are written in heaven: in that heaven Beatrice takes her place, and St Bernard comes to act as guide to Dante. The emblem of theology gives way to guidance of a more mystic quality.

Dante's powers of insight grow as he passes onward: he is invigorated with strength for the last and highest vision.

So Dante sped upwards to the central light of all, and, after prayer in which all the spirits in glory seem to join, high resolve and ardour grew strong within him. His sight was purified and he entered more and more into the glory of the divine light. But the excess of splendour overwhelmed him: memory vainly strove to hold the vision: yet there came into his heart a sweetness born of what he saw, and he longed to bequeath by his utterance to future ages if but a single sparkle of that glory.

His gaze wedded itself to the splendour, so that he saw all created things, all divine operations, all the pages of the universe bound up with love as in one volume. More he saw, for his mind, after gazing, was kindled to a fervour of perception: and with his strengthened sight he beheld, well knowing that the eternal light

itself did not change, three circles, threefold in colour, like rainbow reflected from rainbow; and faint tinted, the human lay within the divine. Like a lightning flash it was given him to see how this could be, but, even at the moment of this supremest revelation, vigour failed. But though perceptive energy failed, power—new power of resolution and ardour—entered into him; he found his will and desire caught up by the resistless might of that love by which the sun, the stars, and all creation moves.

Thus with the vision of God this great pilgrimage ends. All the regions traversed have given their tale and taught their lesson: in every experience Dante has had some share. But what he reached in this final vision was not detailed knowledge: it was, as far as mind goes, the realisation of all things in God: of God in His threefold nature, and of the manhood taken into God. His vision added nothing to knowledge; but it gave what was more precious than knowledge: it brought the inspiration of love as an empowering energy to his wish and to his will. By searching out he could not fathom the measureless depths of the Divine Nature, but by drawing near to God he could become partaker of that Divine Nature, which is love.

Thus the last great scene of this great poem

shows us that, as love alone can lead to the knowledge of God, the highest knowledge man can gain leads but to love.

Wouldst thou enter God's kingdom, O pilgrim of earth? then love. Wouldst thou share the sweet activities of its citizens? then love. Wouldst thou know Him who rules over them and all? then love. For love opens the kingdom of heaven, and love makes the joyousness of its happy services, and none can know the heart of God save through love; for God is love.

LECTURE VI

THE DRAMA OF THE SOUL
(LIFE LOST AND FOUND)

THERE is in modern thought a growing interest in the soul. The verdict of the Frenchman is being recognised, "Tôt ou tard on ne jouait que des âmes." The words of thinking men offer evidence of this tendency. Höffding reminds us that rationalistic measurements of life must yield to a consideration of life-values. Bergson carries us into a region whose atmosphere is psychical. The spirit of dissatisfaction and unrest which prevailed a generation ago has given place to one which recognises the value of religious experiences: ethical questions have taken a place of prominence in thought. The soul of man is acknowledged as having rights and needs.

In the light of the movements of to-day the *Divina Commedia* possesses special interest. No one will deny the historic, literary, and philosophical interest of the poem; but, to use a current phrase,

the poem is a human document: it is a spiritual record. It is much more than a Ghibelline poem: it is a work of world value, because it is the drama of a soul. Dante's life had its drama, and, from the external point of view, the drama must be called a tragedy: he was stripped of all that he held dear: his early ambitions were crushed: his early hopes dissipated. The young life so full of promise leads to a life which closes in exile. But beneath the tragedy of circumstances there is the drama of a soul, and this, such is Dante's own verdict, is not tragedy. The drama of the life may end tragically: the drama of the soul is a divine comedy. The poem is not merely a framework for a series of wonderful and arresting pictures: it is a record of soul experiences: it is the story of Dante's own spiritual advance. It is the *Pilgrim's Progress* of the fourteenth century.

The personal note is heard throughout the poem. It is not a work in which a great poet's vivid imagination plays over a theme of world-wide interest: it is a personal record. The pilgrimage he takes was no mere excursion of the imagination: it was a stern necessity. Only in such a stern experience could his soul reach emancipation.

He tried to climb the sunlit hill of perpetual gladness: its heaven-kissed height seemed to

beckon him. It was the hill of the Lord, upon whose summit the divine light for ever shone: but none could climb that hill whose hands or hearts were stained with wrong. "Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?" the Psalmist had asked, and the Psalmist answered his own question: "Even he that hath clean hands and a pure heart." Obstacles always arose in the path of the guilty. Dante tried to climb, and he met with invincible difficulty. For a time he had hopes of success: the morning shone brightly, the distant hill seemed to smile in the early light, the gay creature which appeared to hinder his steps was but a playful hindrance; but presently the air trembled, a more majestic beast stood across his path, and, lastly, the lean and hungry wolf drove the poet step by step towards the darkness he thought that he had left behind. The straightforward way is closed to him: so he is told that for him there is another path. The direct way of unstained virtue is not for him: for him there is another and a drearier way.

This necessity is due to his own fault or sin. The forms of evil, threefold, withstand him when he seeks to climb. In the language of the Psalmist, he is fallen into the evil times "when the wickedness of his heels compasses him round about." Evil has been sown, and it becomes the

parent of obstacles. Its opposition is felt, not in the physical realm, but in the spiritual. The power of evil is not in things external, as some have deemed: the external consequences of wrong are God's: they are the chastenings and warnings of a divine love. The power of evil is in the spiritual enfeeblement which results from evil indulged in: it is seen in the inability to act with the old vigour of unsullied rectitude: the inertia of righteous indignation: the paralysis of the power to pray, when the words fly upward, but the thoughts remain below. The defeat of Dante on the hill of God is a witness of spiritual deterioration. Some wrong had smitten his soul with weakness.

This is made clear in the words of Beatrice (*Purg.* xxx. 100–145). The vision of Beatrice had awakened in him the ideal of a life, noble, chivalrous, woman-worthy. Had he followed this light, his might have been a bright and stainless career: misfortune and disaster might have been his lot, but these would have been easier to bear had no self-consciousness of wrong shadowed his heart: his wound had then been a clean wound. But when Beatrice died, the grief which overwhelmed him was the prelude of a reckless time. He gave himself to others: Beatrice was less to him: he turned into false paths:

"... into ways untrue he turned his steps,
Pursuing the false images of good,
. . . . . .
So low he fell, that all appliances
For his salvation were already short,
Save showing him the people of perdition."
(*Purg.* xxx. 130–138.)

So low he fell that his friend Guido Cavalcanti flung at him the reproachful words, "la vil tua vita." It is personal wrong-doing which necessitated his pilgrimage: in it he must not only be a spectator, he must also participate in the chastisement. In the *Purgatorio* he must in some measure share the penalties of those who seek purification: he must stoop low with the proud (*Purg.* x. 121–135): he must taste the acrid breath of the dark smoke which envelops the angry (*Purg.* xvi. 1–10): he must pass through the fierce flame which is the portion of lust (*Purg.* xxv. 109–120).

What was the nature of the fault which compelled Dante to encounter such experiences? We must answer with some reserve: we must refuse to yield to the spirit of disproportionate curiosity. In this drama of the soul, it is not so much specific acts of wrong which are of moment: it is the general disposition, not the single deed, which counts. The awakened soul is not troubled so much by the wrong things which he did as by

the haunting consciousness of the lowered or degraded spirit which once held possession of him and which made such deeds possible. In the retrospect of conscience the sense that we ever were dominated by such and such an ill spirit brings the worst torment. This would be felt most keenly in the *Purgatorio*, for it is not the realm in which wrong actions are avenged, but the realm in which the spirit itself is disciplined. There Dante is made to take a retrospect of life. In his pilgrimage he recognises those evil dispositions which gained at one time or another the ascendancy over him.

It is well therefore to check the irrelevant curiosity which would ask chapter and verse for some special act of wrong; but without seeking such, we can form some general idea of the way in which Dante fell below that ideal of life to which the vision of Beatrice called him.

In the *Purgatorio* Dante meets with Forese. Forese was a man whose life was given to the pleasures of sense, and Dante, speaking of the life which he and Forese had lived, speaks of it as a time of which they might be ashamed:

> "If thou bring back to mind
> What thou with me hast been and I with thee,
> The present memory will be grievous still."
> (*Purg.* xxiii. 115–118.)

It is difficult to treat these words except as a confession that Dante and Forese had what in modern parlance would be described as a gay time together. Beatrice's words, spoken later, throw further light upon the life of Dante at the time. Thus she speaks :

". . . If the highest pleasure thus did fail thee
By reason of my death, what mortal thing
Should then have drawn thee into its desire ?
Thou oughtest verily at the first shaft
Of things fallacious to have risen up
To follow me, who was no longer such.
Thou oughtest not to have stooped thy pinions downward
To wait for further blows, or little girl,
Or other vanity of such brief use."

(*Purg.* xxxi. 53–60.)

The truth is, I think, that Dante was what has been called impressionable : he had in high degree the "joie de vivre" : he was "*trasmutabile*"—ready to yield to the influence of the hour ; happy in the company of lively and intelligent ladies, quickly responsive to their smiles, his mercurial spirit caught the mood of the moment. Whatever seriousness the chastenings of life may have evoked later, in his younger days he shared Horace's counsel,

"Nec dulces amores
Sperne puer neque tu choreas,
Donec virenti canities abest
Morosa." (*Carm.* i. 9.)

It is not needful to seek out particulars, we can picture his self-surrender to the joyousness of the hour, even while we can recognise the undercurrent of sorrow which gives an air of recklessness to the merriment of the moment.

His later thoughts may have intensified his power of self-criticism: he may have drawn his tints of that careless time with too dark a pencil. We know how strong is the self-condemnation which devout men have passed upon themselves. In the clear light of spiritual illumination the faults of the past look dark indeed. Never from the unawakened soul do we hear such language of self-reproach as that which breaks forth from saintly lips, and the *Divina Commedia* breathes the burden of the wasted, idle hours in Dante's life which lay heavy upon his heart and memory. This great poem is like a broad river which carries on its ample bosom much freightage for many lands, but whose stream runs steadily in one direction. The interests awakened by the poem are many, but it never swerves from its great purpose as the record of the deep experiences of a soul.

The *Divine Comedy*, then, is the record of personal experience. What is the character of his experience? The author has deliberately chosen from the Christian year the days which he spends in his pilgrimage. The time-marks, as they are called, have commanded the interest of students because of their clear spiritual significance. The day of his painful experience of bewilderment, when he threaded the dark mazes of the rough wood wherein he had lost his way, was Maundy Thursday—the day when the Christ was troubled in spirit and testified that one of His disciples would betray Him. The daylight of Good Friday morning brings hope to the pilgrim, but it is the day in which defeat overtakes him, and he is driven backward and downward in terror: as the evening falls he passes onward to the gate of hell. Through the night of Good Friday, the whole of the following Saturday, and the Saturday night he is in the *Inferno*. On the Easter morning he emerges from the gloom of that shadow of death and beholds once more the stars of heaven. His soul is not left in that evil grave, called the *Inferno*.

The imagery of the times selected is quite simple. The pilgrim passes through an experience which can be best described in terms drawn from the story of Christ. St Paul gave spiritual

significance to the experiences of Christ. To pass through death into life was the way to spiritual ripeness of age. This view became current in Christendom. It found expression in theological formulæ: baptism symbolised the experience: the convert was buried with Christ in baptism, and raised up in Him to newness of life. Hymns sung in all quarters of the world have adopted the same spiritual imagery. The scientific investigator of Christian experiences describes the psychological changes of these experiences in terms which form a parallel to this spiritual imagery. The spirit of self-satisfaction, he says, is invaded by higher visions of life's possibilities: intense dissatisfaction becomes the portion of the soul. It seems thrust down into hell, till it finds a new power of life in the service of another than self, and so it enters into a life upon which heaven's light shines. The language of St Paul is found to be expressive of an experience common and constant: "I was alive without the law once, but when the law came, sin revived, and I died," till "being crucified with Christ" he lived, but not he, but the Christ which was in him.

The *Divine Comedy*, as the record of a spiritual experience, is the expansion of this great Christian formula of experience. The *Inferno* is the revelation of evil: the witness that the wages of sin is

death. The *Purgatorio* is the life of struggle to overcome sin. The *Paradiso* is the entering into the full liberty of the children of God. The experiences are continuous: the pilgrimage is one: its spiritual significance grows clearer as we pass from stage to stage.

The pilgrim, however, is never outside the divine love: the help of God's grace is always with him; but the lessons which the pilgrimage is to teach must be learned one by one, and learned personally. He must learn to see vice in its own ugliness. He must learn the need of effort co-operating with grace: he must learn to surrender self and even self-effort to the great tide of the divine love which sweeps all souls, who are filled with good will, back to the embrace of God's presence. It is a pictorial rendering of Christian experience.

It may be felt by some that in this experience one feature is lacking. In the normal records of such experiences we are accustomed to hear often the name of Christ. Christ is felt to be personally the life power of the visions of the soul, and in the *Divina Commedia* it may be said that we miss this ecstatic love and devotion to Christ.

Let us see how the matter stands. Christ, the personal Lord of the soul, does not appear early in the narrative. The victory of the triumphant Conqueror on the cross is referred to, but the

DANTE, AFTER LUCA SIGNORELLI.
(Orvieto: The Duomo. Fresco.)

names—Jesus or Christ—are not once mentioned in the *Inferno*. In the *Purgatorio* proper the name Christ appears five times, but only allusively, not as taking any part or affording any spiritual strength to the pilgrim. Not till we reach the earthly Paradise do we learn from the poet what Christ is to him, or what part Christ plays in this great tale of experience. In the *Paradiso* the name Christ occurs thirty-four times. It is not, however, the number of times in which the sacred name is on the poet's lips which we seek to know, but the place which he assigns to Christ in this great story of a soul's redemption. In the earthly Paradise, and in the *Paradiso* proper, Christ is introduced three times. The planet Mars, which is the heavenly lodge wherein the martyrs and soldiers of Christ may be met, is appropriately marked with the sign of the cross: this heaven is illustrious with those who, like their master, loved not their lives unto death. But the two occasions more relevant to our purpose in which Christ is introduced are to be found earlier and later.

In Canto xxix. the gryphon appears as the emblem of Christ. The gryphon draws the triumphal chariot of the Church. Here the powers of the Old and New Testaments are seen: here the three Christian graces and the four cardinal virtues

are gathered together. All the helps and incentives to virtue and goodness, all the inspiring appeals which warn and move the soul, all the various ministries by the way are assembled in allegory, and the power which draws them forward is the Christ Himself. All that has helped the pilgrim has been, though unknown to him, due to the Christ who alone gives to His Church its active and progressive energy. All help is through Him. But, again, if I understand it rightly, Christ is the final test of the soul; Dante, when he hears the reproaches of Beatrice, stands in the presence of the gryphon (one person only in two natures), that is, in the presence of Christ, and it is when Beatrice turns round towards the Christ, and in His presence grows more glorious, that Dante feels the keenest pangs of self-reproach:

"So pricked me then the thorn of penitence,
That of all other things the one which turned me
Most to its love because the most my foe.
Such self-conviction stung me at the heart,
O'erpowered I fell." (*Purg.* xxxi. 85-89.)

The measure of Dante's fault is the wisdom brought by Christ; so it is before Christ's judgment-seat that Dante is judged.

But Christ is not for judgment alone: He is for redemption; for once the pilgrim has been plunged into the waters of Lethe and has tasted

their sweetness, new visions are granted to him. The virtues, which are nymphs, but in the full heaven are stars, lead him back towards the gryphon. The three graces quicken his sight. Beatrice's eyes glow with intense light as she gazes at the gryphon; and lo! in Dante's view the gryphon is seen transforming itself, though motionless, showing now one nature, now another. It is the symbol of Him who as man brings God to man, and as God brings man to God, the one whose changeless love shines upon man with light and revelation as man is able to bear it. Thus Christ is seen unveiling His glory to the pilgrim. Through the eyes and soul of Beatrice the revelation comes. She is the divine wisdom, the splendour of the living light eternal; but Christ Himself, the gryphon, is the living light eternal, through whom the glory of all wisdom comes. He is the judge by whom all souls are tried: He is the one from whom streams the light of highest knowledge, with comfort and strength.

In harmony with this, we find that in the heaven of the Fixed Stars, Christ is the central and triumphant light: there the victory of His life and death is made manifest: His light is like that of the sun: so intense is that light that Dante is smitten with blindness:

"What overmasters thee,
A virtue is from which naught shields itself.
There are the wisdom and the omnipotence
That oped the thoroughfares 'twixt heaven and earth,
For which there erst had been so long a yearning."
(*Par.* xxiii. 35–39.)

When sight came back to him Dante realises that all around him there is music and light. What he sees is like the glory of some half-remembered vision. The splendour has a touch of familiarity about it. His soul recognises, yet cannot wholly recall, what shines upon him in the smile of Beatrice. Beatrice bids him look upon the Garden of the Saints, seen like flowers: upon them rays of Christ are shining, and under that light they are blossoming. Melody sweet and entrancing breathes everywhere, and proclaims itself as the angelic love, which encompasses her who gave Christ to the world, and will still circle round her as she follows her Son.

"And I shall circle, Lady of Heaven, while
Thou followest thy Son, and mak'st diviner
The sphere supreme, because thou enterest there."
(*Par.* xxiii. 106–108.)

Such was the light and gladness of the saints—the

". . . company elect to the great Supper
Of the Lamb benedight," (*Par.* xxiv. 1–2.)

who feedeth them so that they hunger no more.

As we follow the poet's progress we can estimate in some degree what the Christ is to his soul. Christ is the One who draws to him all the helps and comforts, the graces and virtues which are to fill his soul. As the pilgrim passes upward the glory of Christ is unfolded to him in the victory of the cross and the dazzling light of His nearer presence. Every step of the way is marked, not only by enlarged revelation of the divine glory, but by increased capacity of spiritual perception, till in the final vision of the triumph of Christ he approaches that stage when he can realise what the Apostle meant when he dreamed of presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Thus the pilgrimage of the soul does not end with the earthly Paradise. It passes upward to fuller revelations and fresher invigorations of spirit: it sees new glories, and it undergoes a subtle and continuous change of inward capacity. In other words, the experiences of the soul as told in the poem do not cease with the attainment of the earthly Paradise.

We need to examine the nature and conditions of this final or Paradise experience of the soul.

There are two experiences mentioned which call for our attention. They are experiences which are different in character from any of the earlier experiences in the *Purgatorio* or in the

Inferno. One is the experience of movement: the other that of change. The poet discovers that he is moving upward rapidly without any personal consciousness of movement. Light increases round the pilgrim: to him it seems that the light of one day is added, as though God had added to the heavens a second sun (*Par.* i. 61–63). As Dante longs to understand this, Beatrice tells him:

"Thou art not upon earth, as thou believest;
But lightning, fleeing its appropriate site,
Ne'er ran as thou." (*Par.* i. 91–93.)

He has been moving upward without knowing it. The nature of all things is to move towards God. In Dante's case the obstacles which thwarted this natural movement have been removed, and now he is borne onward as an arrow to its mark by the impulse of the vibrating cord:

"And thither now, as to a site decreed,
Bears us away the virtue of that cord
Which aims its arrows at a joyous mark."
(*Par.* i. 124–126.)

He ought not to wonder at this, for to his renewed soul this movement is according to the order of its being:

"Thou shouldst not wonder more, if well I judge,
At thine ascent, than at a rivulet
From some high mount descending to the lowland.

Marvel it would be in thee, if deprived
Of hindrance, thou wert seated down below,
As if on earth the living fire were quiet."
(*Par.* i. 136–141.)

The other experience is that of change. He discovers that the change which he thinks is taking place in the object he beholds, is not a change in the object but a change in himself. The highest vision of all is of that which does not change:

"For it is always what it was before;
But though the sight, that fortified itself
In me by looking, one appearance only
To me was ever changing as I changed."
(*Par.* xxxiii. 111–114.)

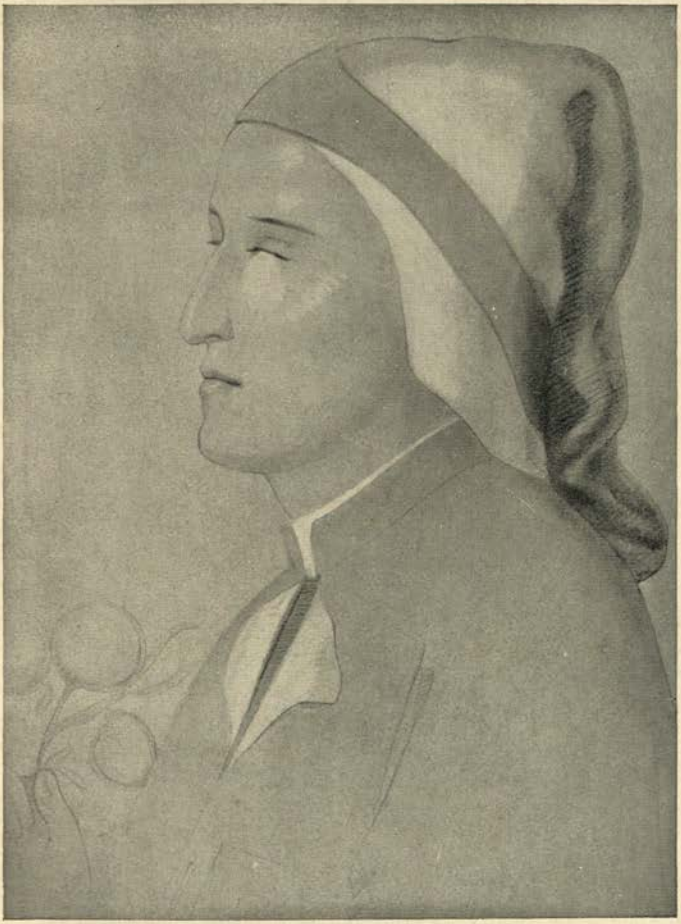
This principle of a change in the soul as the pilgrim advances seems to be consistently adhered to in the *Paradiso*; whatever new visions meet him, he passes through some change; some new virtue or capacity is given to him that he may be enabled to behold the glories which are being disclosed to him. In the first canto, as we have seen, he compared this change to that which befell Glaucus, when he tasted

"of the herb that made him
Peer of the other gods beneath the sea."
(*Par.* i. 68–69.)

In the vision of Christ's triumph he knew that inner strength was vouchsafed to him. He compared his growing power of mind to a fire unlocking itself from a cloud, dilating itself beyond the limits of its prison house :

> "So did my mind, among those aliments
> Becoming larger, issue from itself."
> (*Par.* xxiii. 43–44.)

The spiritual counterpart of these things is found in the experience of the soul. The *Paradiso* differs from the *Purgatorio*, as effortless progress differs from laborious upward advance. In the *Purgatorio* every step means effort, the pilgrim is conscious of fatigue and failing strength ; it is exertion felt and known till the summit is reached. But in the *Paradiso*, all is changed : there is no cessation of movement, but it is movement without effort : the soul is borne upward by the irresistible law of its own restored nature : a force greater than its own bears it forward. In the *Purgatorio* the pilgrim tries and toils ; in the *Paradiso* he needs only to surrender himself to the great divine tide of goodness which sets Godward. The life of conflict is exchanged for the life of full assurance of faith. As long as the soul is governed by the sense of law, the battle between the conscience and impulse goes on ; the



DANTE, FROM GIOTTO'S FRESCO IN THE BARGELLO.
(From the reproduction published by the Arundel Society in 1859.)

heart is not wholly given to the highest; the arena of conflict is in the moral sphere of conscience and passion, each clamouring for the verdict of the hesitating will; but when the love of the divine fills the soul, the will is carried captive to right: the struggle ends; liberty is reached, for the spirit is emancipated from the claims of the lower; the will of God becomes our will; in His will is our peace (*Par.* iii. 85): His service is perfect freedom, for in it we are working according to the true order of our being. This joyous and effortless movement is the abiding law of the *Paradiso*. The soul need struggle no more; it has found rest and liberty in the divine order: it surrenders itself to the tide of the divine life which flows freely around it: such souls are led by the spirit of God, because they are sons of God.

This is none other than the great surrender of recognised spiritual experience. "I live, yet not I," cried St Paul: his old nature is self-condemned, the new man is recognised in the economy of the soul. The Christian pilgrim is content to be led by God. He is no longer nervously solicitous about saving his soul: he puts no anxious hand upon the ark when it seems to shake: he is content to let God do His own work. His thought is Godward. "When shall I appear before God?" "My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the

living God." "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us." These are his prayers.

With this comes the other experience of the soul—the inward change which sometimes seems a change in outward things. Life is just the same as before: duties are the same, work is the same, friends are the same; but all these appear to have changed their meaning, their value, their interest. A new beauty and charm have been added to life. In its light we see light. If we grow pure by being purely shone upon, we gain through purity a clearer and happier view of life. As we follow the pilgrim poet in his upward flight, and notice the growing intensity of light through which he moves, we feel that the *Paradiso* is but an expansion of the familiar words: "We, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed from glory to glory even as by the spirit of the Lord." The pilgrim himself is unconscious of the change: he cannot explain: whether in the body or out of the body matters not. His progress is like growth: it is something which goes on: something which he does not feel, but rather of which he becomes aware as stage succeeds stage in the miracle of life's progress. It is the experience of which Greene wrote:

"Then comes the Spirit to our hut,
When fast the senses' doors are shut."

The natural sense is superseded when the things of the spirit take their place in our experience, for they are spiritually discerned. The spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God.

Thus the experiences indicated in the *Paradiso* fall into line with the spiritual experiences of awakened souls. They are not fictions of the fancy: though Dante, with his adventurous imagination, has clothed them with dazzling apparel; they are still but splendid forms of personal experiences which have been shared by multitudes since St Paul wrote his Epistles and St Augustine his *Confessions*. Dante expresses in his way what Tauler told in his sermons and what Bunyan detailed in his *Pilgrim's Progress*.

The value of the *Divina Commedia* is various. It repays the study of the historian, the philosopher, the archæologist, the naturalist, but its central thought reveals its spiritual value. That value springs from its personal quality, and that personal quality is the spiritual experience of the poet set forth in his own subtle, splendid, and ample fashion.

Is there any further word to be said? Yes, one. I have said that there is a word which is like the keynote to the whole poem. That word is love. *Amore* is whispered in the dark shades of

the *Inferno* : it is enunciated with clearness in the *Purgatorio* : it becomes music and perpetual song in the *Paradiso*. It was love which made Dante face the hideous revelations of the *Inferno* : it was love which sent him Virgil—Reason—as a guide : it was love which bore him slumbering to the gate of the Purgatory : it was love which sent him sweet dreams of warning and of hope : it was love which challenged him to enter the flame, in which all the gross dregs of passion were purged away that love's fire might burn with clear purity once more. It was love's realm into which he entered as he mounted upward with Beatrice at his side. It was at last into the flaming heart of divine love that he looked, and learned that love was the moving power and final rest of the universe. It is of love—divine, unfailing, changeless love : of love—almighty, inexorable, inspiring love of which he sings. God's love—to be seen, felt, known, realised everywhere and always in human life—is his message to his fellow-men. To give such a message, expressed in such unexampled splendour of form, was a lot which compensated for a thousand sorrows and disappointments. Had his lot been less shadowed with grief, he would perchance have achieved far less. Had he been successful in his early ambitions, he might have been known as a magistrate whose name found a

place among the city records of Florence; but sorrow claimed him and sorrow crowned him: she put this deathless song in his mouth: she made him sing, but it was no threnody he sang—for God put His own new song into his mouth, and the *Divina Commedia* is a thanksgiving unto God.

And now that our task is ended, how shall I pass on the message of Dante to you? Some of you are on the threshold of life: different callings and different destinies lie before you. Here you meet: in a little time you will be scattered: many and various will be your occupations, but whatever your work among the countless useful and honourable avocations of your country, your life may be noble and true. As one honoured among the many honoured names of Harvard sang:

> "In many ways may life be given,
> And loyalty to truth be sealed
> As bravely in the closet as the field,
> So bountiful is fate."

Yes—for love is over all life: that is Dante's message: love is over all life. That very love may call you to disappointment, batter you with undeserved blows, fling you aside neglected, yes, plunge you into hell, or bid you climb the bitter steep of some laborious Purgatory; but it will

not leave you nor forsake you: it will bring you out into the sweet table-land of peace; it will show you at length that life is always under the rule of that eternal love by which the sun, the stars, and all creation move.

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